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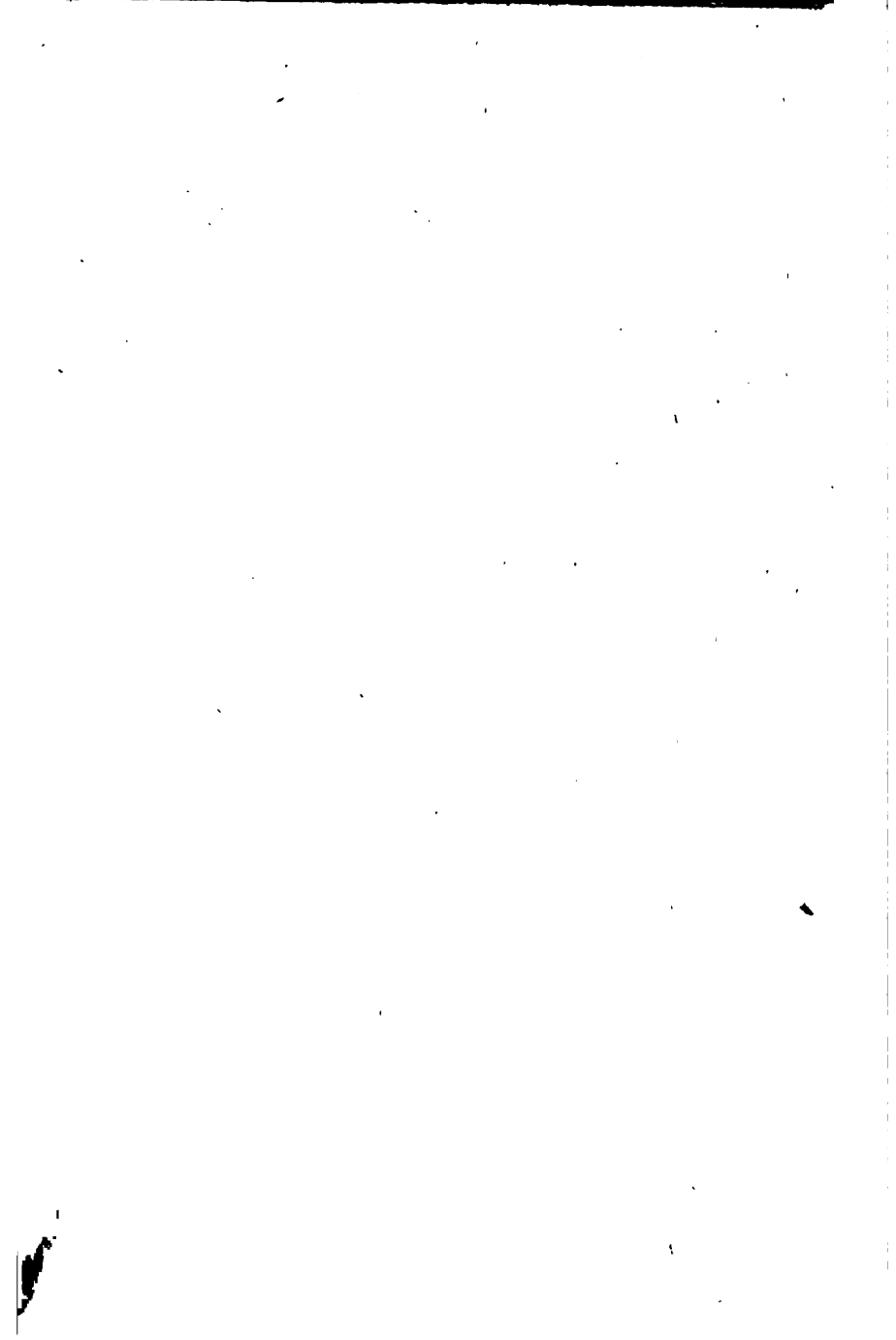
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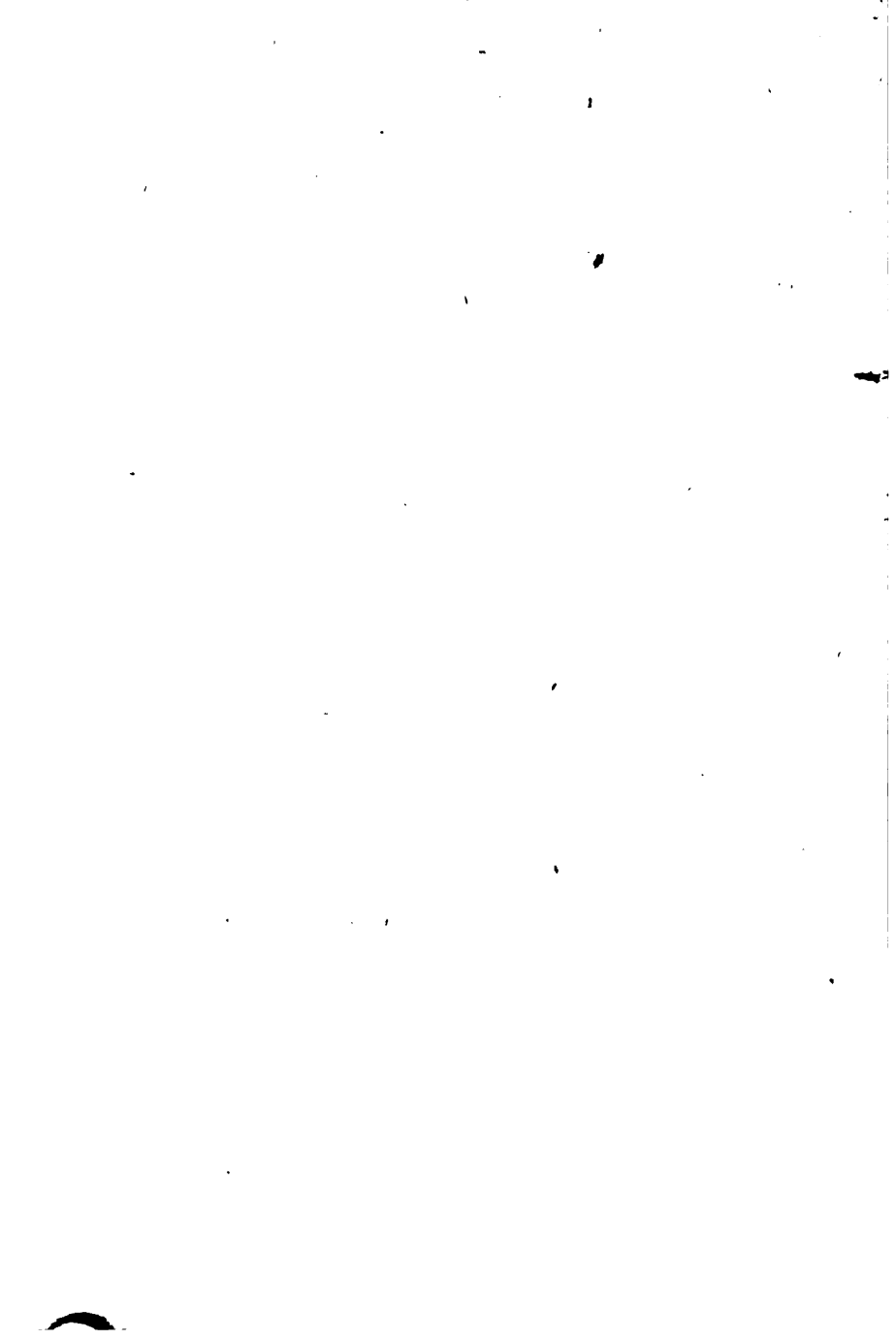
Prison of Race

B.L.FARJEON

To the subject







THE PRIDE OF RACE

THE PRIDE OF RACE

In Five Panels

BY

B. L. FARJEON

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LONDON

HUTCHINSON & CO.

PATERNOSTER ROW

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THE PRIDE OF RACE

Panel the First.—The Rise of Moses Mendoza

CHAPTER I

MOSES MENDOZA PAYS A VISIT TO MR SEPTIMUS GRAY

SOME eighteen years ago the principal of a famous public school, situated midway between Oxford and London, received a visitor of an unusual character. The card brought to him was not engraved; the name it bore, Mr Moses Mendoza, was written in a bold hand, and there was a quality of self-assertion, even of aggressiveness, in the up and down strokes which was not a recommendation in the eyes of Mr Septimus Gray. Neither was it a recommendation that the card bore upon it the somewhat too visible impress of a coarse broad thumb, denoting the absence of that mark of gentility, a card-case.

The school of which Mr Septimus Gray was the principal had been the training ground of many distinguished public men, and access to it was not easy. The position it held was due entirely to the wisdom of the guiding hand. A gentleman and a scholar of high repute, it was said of Mr Septimus Gray that he possessed the faculty of bringing into active play precisely those qualities which

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were most likely to be of service to his pupils in the careers for which they were destined ; and when he found that such and such a pupil was in his judgment unfitted for the sphere in which the parents wished their son to move, he had no hesitation in pointing out their error. The result of these methods was the avoidance of square pegs in round holes.

At the time when Mr Moses Mendoza's visiting-card was laid before him he was busy over a number of examination papers. He was not an irritable man, and the reproachful look he cast upon the attendant had in it more of sorrow than of anger.

'You are quite aware, Fletcher, that I do not receive visitors at this time of the day.'

'I told the—the person so an hour ago, sir,' said Fletcher.

'An hour ago ! Then what made him call again ?'

'He did not call again, sir. He never went away.'

Mr Gray cast a look of inquiry at the servant. 'But you told him to go ?'

'Yes, sir, I told him to go. I even tried to persuade him.

'He insisted upon remaining ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What excuse did he make ?'

'He didn't make no excuse—'

'Fletcher ! Fletcher !'

'I mean he didn't make any excuse, sir. He said he would wait till you were at liberty.'

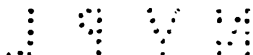
'Well, well ! Go to him now, say that I have received his card, and ask him to write. You have great powers of persuasion, Fletcher.'

'Thank you, sir.'

'And do not let me be disturbed again until luncheon is ready.'

'Very good, sir.'

At lunch time, Fletcher waiting at table, Mr Gray said,—



'You gave the man my message. Did he say he would write?'

'He said he'd rather not, sir.'

'At all events he went away.'

'Oh, no, sir; he is still waiting.'

Mr Gray dropped his knife and fork. 'What on earth is he waiting for? He must have been here—'

'Over three hours, sir. He came at ten; it is now half-past one.'

Mr Gray proceeded with his luncheon in rather helpless fashion, without, however, allowing the pertinacity of Mr Moses Mendoza to irritate him.

'What is his business?' he presently said. 'Does he wish to dispose of something—has he a package of parcels—is he a commission agent or a commercial traveller?'

'He said he wasn't in the travelling way, sir, and that his business was quite private.'

'What kind of a man is he, Fletcher?'

'A so-so kind of a man, sir,' replied Fletcher, dubiously. 'As pleasant a kind of man to speak to as you ever saw, but with something about him that—' He made little circles in the air with two fingers of his right hand in his endeavour to explain his meaning.

Mr Gray smiled. 'He possesses at least one valuable quality—patience. I gather that you would not consider him a gentleman.'

'Oh, no, sir, he's a Jew.'

'Never let me hear a remark of that nature from you again, Fletcher,' said Mr Gray, in a tone of severity. 'A man may be both a Jew and a gentleman; I have met with many such, and have learned from them much that is worth learning. You share a vulgar prejudice. The name of Mendoza is an illustrious one; we are indebted to a member of that family for a very valuable monument of literature—*Josephus*, which I do not suppose you have read.'

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'No, sir, I never 'ave—have.'

'That is right, Fletcher,' said Mr Gray, with twinkling eyes. 'We cannot be too careful of the aspirate. Show Mr Moses Mendoza into my study. I will see him there.'

Fletcher retired, abashed if not convinced, and a few minutes later Mr Gray joined his visitor in the study. He found him, hat in hand, standing before the bookcase, gazing at the titles with a kind of awe.

Mr Moses Mendoza was a man somewhat under forty years of age. His eyes were peculiarly bright, his face beamed with good nature, his voice was jovial, his manners easy and confident. He was not particularly well dressed, his hat showed signs of wear, and his hands were ungloved.

'Give you my word, Mr Septimus Gray,' he said familiarly upon the entrance of that gentleman, and broke off in the middle of the sentence, and, looking up, cocked his head on one side like a genial, knowing human canary. 'Beg you a thousand pardons. It *is* Mr Septimus Gray I 'ave the honour of speaking to?'

'That is my name,' said Mr Gray, a little stiffly. He had the intention at first of offering his visitor a seat, but he refrained from doing so when Mr Mendoza's guttural voice fell upon his ears.

'Give you my word, sir,' continued Mr Mendoza, 'when a man looks at all them names'—he pointed to the backs of the books—'the little he knows makes 'im feel ashamed of 'isself.'

'I understand you have been waiting some time to see me,' said Mr Gray, declining to be drawn into a literary discussion. 'I am sorry, but my time is much occupied—'

'Why, of course, sir, of course; but don't mind *me*. If you've anything particular to do now, I'm agreeable to wait till you've done it.'

'You will oblige me by explaining the nature of your business, and by being as brief as possible.'

'Certainly, sir. I'll come to the point at once, though I ought to tell you first 'ow it is I got to know your name and your school.'

'I am all attention.'

'When I mentioned what was in my mind to a gentleman who was once a friend of your'n, he said to me, "If you can persuade Mr Septimus Gray to take your boy it'll be the making of 'im"—meaning the making of my boy. "It'll be the making of 'im," he says, and then he gives me your address.'

'A gentleman who was once a friend of mine?' questioned Mr Gray.

'Is name is Mr Eustace Ponsonby Melburn, very 'ighly connected, but just now down in the world, down in the world.'

'I knew Mr Melburn many years ago,' said Mr Gray, passing his hand across his brow with a perturbed air.

'So he told me, sir.'

'He was a dear and valued friend—'

'Yes, sir, yes.'

'But circumstances to which it would be painful to refer was the cause of a breach between us. Is he well—and prosperous?'

'So fur from being prosperous, sir,' replied Mr Moses Mendoza, gravely, 'that if he was put up to auction to-morrow morning he wouldn't fetch as much as 'd pay for the 'ammer. So fur from being well, he ain't got long to live.' The touch of genuine sympathy in Mr Mendoza's voice, and the sadness born of old memories, brought a troubled light into Mr Gray's eyes.

'I regret to hear it,' he said tenderly, 'I deeply, deeply regret it. Not long to live! No, no—not so bad as that!'

'He said you'd feel sorry if you 'appened to 'ear it.'

'He wishes to see me. I will go to him.'

'No, sir, it's the last thing he wishes.'

'Surely you are in error, Mr Mendoza.'

'Meaning I'm mistook?'

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'That is my meaning.'

'I'm not, sir. It's what he's said 'isself twenty times and more.'

'What is his reason?'

'You've only got to be with 'im for a 'arf hour or so to find that out. You see, Mr Gray,' said Moses Mendoza, emphasising his words with a confidential forefinger, 'we're wonderfully made, as somebody says in a play, but we ain't exactly clockwork. There's 'ardly a clock in the world that can't be set right when it runs down. It ain't the way with us, sir. When a man's run down as Mr Eustace Ponsonby Melburn's run down'—he gave the full name with an air of enjoyment, and as though the mere rolling of it off his tongue was a sufficient justification for his visit—'there's no setting of 'im going again. Mr Melburn knows it, sir; he's under no delusions respecting 'isself. Last night he says, "Mr Mendoza," he says, "I'm past mending. The 'and of death lays 'eavy on me." A little later he says, "Mr Mendoza, if you was dying as I'm dying, a stranger among strangers, and 'ad but one wish, what would it be?" "To be buried, sir, among my own people," I answers. "I shall never be buried among mine," he says, "and I don't deserve to be. You'd 'ardly believe, Mr Mendoza, that I once 'ad friends who loved me." With that, sir, he gives a groan, and turns 'is face to the wall. I give you my word, Mr Gray, I felt as if I was going to choke.'

Mr Mendoza paused—not because he had nothing more to say, but because Mr Gray had covered his eyes with his hand. For several minutes no word was spoken by either of the two men, one sitting at the table burdened with sad memories, the other standing patiently and sympathisingly, waiting for the opportune moment to proceed with the unfolding of that part of his mission which was nearest to his heart.

Meanwhile, in that quiet study invisible links were stretching from the present to the past.

CHAPTER II

MEMORIES OF THE PAST

WITH the eyes of his mind Mr Septimus Gray sees two lads, loving friends, himself and Melburn. They are in the same college at Oxford, one pursuing his studies with earnest mind, his eyes fixed upon the goal he wishes to reach, while the other starts up at every butterfly that presents itself and runs to catch it. Gray's parents are poor, Melburn's rich, and it is to the latter that the indigent lad is indebted for the opportunity that gives England a famous scholar. It is due to this circumstance that the more ambitious lad cannot take his friend too seriously to task for the indolence that threatens to destroy a noble career. It is a delicate position, and Melburn's passionate love for him, his yielding, amiable disposition, his charm of manner, his extravagant generosity, do not improve it. Let Gray but express a regret that he does not possess a book of reference too expensive for his purse, and in as short a time as he himself can obtain it there it is upon his table.

'For you, dear lad,' says Melburn, 'from Mother Shipton.'

Still, as time goes on, and Gray is stepping steadily towards the goal while Melburn is steadily slipping back, he feels it at length his duty to speak straightforwardly to his friend. He does so once, twice, a third time, again, and yet again. And every time he gently chides and warns and entreats, Melburn with a charming smile promises to

amend, calling heaven and earth to witness, and in an hour forgets the promise and is running after a new butterfly or indulging in the gratification of a new whim; and being detected puts on a contrite air or scuds off laughing.

'But look here, Melburn.'

'Fire away, dear boy.'

'Think of the future.'

'I don't see the necessity. What a lovely evening it is! Come out on the river.'

'No. I have five hours' hard grind before I go to bed.'

'What's the good of working oneself to death? Come out on the river.'

'I have my way to make in the world.'

'And you'll make it, Gray. All the fellows agree—there's but one opinion—you'll come out on the top. But why grind so hard, dear boy? I have money enough for two.' He pulls out a handful of gold and a bundle of bank-notes, and throws them on the table. 'Let's divide now.'

'Put it away, my dear Melburn. I owe you too much already.'

'Me! Not a penny! How dare you fling that in my teeth?'

'Your father, then. I mean to repay him for his goodness to me; to repay not only the money he has thrown away upon me—'

'Not thrown away, Gray. I'll not hear you say that.'

'Well, I hope not. But I mean to show some small sense of his kindness by doing my duty towards his son. I should be a cur to see you drift and drift without putting in a word. You are not listening to me, Melburn; your eyes are closed.'

'I can listen better so. With my eyes open there is so much to distract me; with them closed there is some chance of your words finding their way to my brain—what little there is of it. Is it my fault, dear boy?'

‘Your fault—for what?’

‘That I have so little brain? I didn’t make it for myself—it was made for me. Pray do me the justice to believe that I do not advance this as an original observation; it has been advanced in different ways a thousand times. Nor do I advance it as a new field of philosophy. But there must be something new to be said about it. Say it, dear boy with the big brain, say it.’

‘Will nothing make you serious, Melburn?’

‘I am perfectly serious. My eyes are open now.’

The early rays of the setting sun shone upon the bright, laughing eyes, upon the curly hair, all dishevelled, upon the whimsical helplessness in the handsome face. A kind of helplessness steals also upon Gray as he gazes at his friend.

‘I am rather at a loss how to speak to you, Melburn.’

‘I am sorry to distress you, dear boy. It is something about drifting. As a rule I find it pleasant. What is it you wish me to do?’

‘To study, to take life a little more seriously, to think a little less of money—’

Melburn breaks into a laugh. ‘I can’t think less of it than I do, upon my honour. It is, in my opinion, the merest dross.’

‘You do not understand me. I mean, a little less of it as an excuse for idling away your time, for making a holiday of every day in the year. We are in the world to do men’s work—’

Melburn jumps up. ‘Enough. I understand. I will not have another idle hour. I will do my work. I promise.’

‘You have promised before, dear Melburn.’

‘I ought to be shot. Let the dead past bury its dead. You have my promise. Now, give me one in return.’

‘What is it?’

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‘That you will never forget that I love you. If I am not to be depended upon in any other respect I am in this—that I love you as never man loved man before, that I honour you as never man honoured man before, that I set such value upon your friendship that it would be the greatest misfortune that could befall me if I were to lose it, that I see your heart overflowing with goodness for your scapegrace comrade, and that I am deeply, deeply grateful for it. Dear Gray, I love you!’

The exquisite tenderness of Melburn’s voice, the eyes charged with tears that still hang in them, the sincerity shining in the handsome boyish face, are so overpowering in their effect upon Gray that he stands spellbound and speechless, and when Melburn says presently, ‘It is a glorious evening, dear boy. Come out on the river,’ he follows without demur, as though magnetically drawn by an invisible chain of love which he finds it impossible to resist.

This and other scenes of the kind pass before the mind’s eye of Septimus Gray, some of the most enduring of which are drawn from a six months’ tour through Europe in the company of his friend after they have left college.

Never to be forgotten days! Charged with poetic fire, with sweetest imaginings, with dreams that purify, with noble thoughts and aspirations. Never to be forgotten days, the memory of which, when old age comes, touches the past with a pathetic light in which sadness and joy are wistfully commingled. Never, never to be forgotten days!

Then the return to England, where Gray takes the steps which lead to the establishment of his famous school, and where Melburn, his father dead and he the heir to a great fortune, plunges into the vortex of the dissolute life of London. The friends are parted now, and see each other only at odd times, the intervals growing longer after every meeting. There is no restraining influence by Melburn’s

side to steer him past the rocks, no purifying example to give him pause. He is going the pace at headlong speed, and harpies, male and female, gather round him to debase, corrupt and destroy. Tales of his excesses reach Gray's ears, and he hastens to London to implore his friend to live a purer life. He finds him in outward appearance the same—there is no visible alteration in the bright, laughing eyes, the tender voice, the whimsical helplessness on the handsome face. And Melburn vows amendment and renews his promises, and, renouncing his evil ways, begs Gray never to forget that he loves and honours him beyond all other men, and that his heart is filled with gratitude.

Later on worse tales float to the ears of the sorrowing friend, and again he pleads, and again the promise is given which is never to be fulfilled. For Melburn goes from worse to worse. Lower and lower does he fall, and in blind pursuit of the lowest depth drives wildly on, consorts with the vilest, drinks deeper still, utterly squanders his fortune, breaks his mother's heart, breaks also the heart of a younger woman who looks up to him as to a god—

The pity of it! The pity of it!

At length the final snapping of the last link of friendship, the last meeting, the sad farewell words of the upright man, the silence of the broken man as he realises that this is indeed the end—a silence broken but once when Gray is at the door.

'Gray, one moment—one moment only. All that you have said is just, all that you have ever said is just. I do not seek to justify myself, I do not ask you to see me again. All is over between us. But remember, oh, remember, if ever you cast a thought upon your fallen friend, that he loves and honours you, and that with all the earnestness of which his base heart is capable, he asks the God he has offended to bless you and make your days happy! Do not speak, do not harbour the hope that you would be more

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successful in the future than you have been in the past. I am not to be trusted, Gray, except in the assurance that my love for you will not fade, will not be weakened, while I draw breath. I used to call you "dear boy," you remember. Once more I call you by that dear name. Dear boy, farewell !'

The heart-broken yet resigned pathos of these words overcomes Septimus Gray—only the golden moments of the past are in his mind. He turns and stretches forth his arms, but Melburn repulses him and flies.

From that day, now twenty years ago, they have not met, nor has any farther news of Melburn reached the friend he has lost. Strangely enough, even up to their last interview, Melburn had retained his youthful appearance, and when Gray thinks of him it is always as he knew him in the dear old days in Oxford and on the Continent. It is natural, surrounded as he is with pressing cares and duties, that the memory even of such a friendship, with all its affecting and pregnant episodes, should grow weaker with time. Only at rare intervals does the image of Melburn present itself to the mind of Septimus Gray, and at the news Moses Mendoza has brought to him the links that unite the present with the past are throbbing with tender light.

He removes his hand from his eyes, and, looking up, sees Moses Mendoza smoothing his almost napless hat with the cuff of his coat sleeve. Patience on a monument had never a better representative.

CHAPTER III

THE CHAMOIS LEATHER BAG

SEPTIMUS GRAY was not aware that there stood before him a man who, humble as he was, generally succeeded, by good-humoured, dogged pertinacity, in carrying to a successful issue any scheme upon which he set his heart.

'I beg your pardon, Mr Mendoza,' he said, 'but your account of an old and dear friend has deeply distressed me; at such a time one thinks of the past.'

'It's what Mr Melburn thinks of pretty nigh always, sir.'

'And speaks of it?'

'He 'ardly talks of anythink else, of you and 'im when you was at college and travelled together. No one was ever closer to anyone's 'eart than you are to 'is.'

'And yet you tell me he will not see me?'

'It's the honest truth, Mr Gray. I give 'im my word not to say where he lives, and it ain't for me to break it.'

'It would be wrong to ask you, and yet there are circumstances—' he paused. 'However, I will not press you. Can I do nothing for him?'

'I think you can, sir.' And now there was a new note in Moses Mendoza's voice—as though some vital chord had been touched.

'Let me know what I can do.'

Moses Mendoza laid his well-worn hat on the table, and produced from his pocket an envelope wrapped in a piece of newspaper, which he handed to Mr Gray. He opened it and read:—

The Pride of Race

'DEAR GRAY,—If you can see your way to assist Mr Mendoza I shall be glad. He has been kind to me.

'EUSTACE.'

It was an explanation of the purport of Moses Mendoza's visit. He took out his purse and was opening it when his visitor held up a protesting hand. 'No, sir, if you please. I 'aven't come to ask for money.'

'For what, then?'

'I've got a son, Mr Gray. I want you to take 'im into your school.'

Mr Gray pushed back his chair. 'Impossible, Mr Mendoza!'

'Don't say that, Mr Gray. Nothink's impossible. I know what's passing through your mind, but Raphe ain't like me—no, sir, not like me a bit, and I'm glad of it. Mr Melburn says he's got the makings of a gentleman in 'im, and he ought to know, being a gentleman 'isself. And he says somethink more—that Raphe's got the makings of a scholar in 'im, and he ought to know, being brought up at Oxford along of you. You don't blame me, do you, sir, for wanting to do the best I can for my boy?'

'No, no, Mr Mendoza. Your feelings as a father do you credit.'

'There it is, sir. My feelings as a father. There's nothink in this world that I wouldn't do for Raphe. He's my only child, sir. 'Is mother's dead, God rest 'er soul! She was brought up better than me, and the wish nearest 'er 'eart was that Raphe should 'ave a good edycation, and a chance of growing up a better kind of man than I am. Not that she ever said a word to 'urt my feelings—the gentlest, kindest woman, Mr Gray—but there it was in 'er mind, and in mine, too, sir. It's been a pride to me to see that Raphe don't favour me in looks and manners. He takes after 'is mother, and she was a lady born and bred,

though poor. To look at 'im you'd swear he was the son of a gentleman. But there's a copybook saying that I wrote out a 'undred times when I was at school myself—not much good my being there, Mr Gray, as you can see with 'arf an eye; never was a dab at anythink in that way—there's a copybook saying that evil communication corrupts good manners. Raphe's ten years old now, and I 'aven't done 'im much 'arm as yet, but there's no saying what 'arm I might do 'im if I kep' 'im living with me till he grew to be a man. I want 'im to go away from me, right away from me and the people I mix with; I want 'im to be in a place where he can mix with gentlemen, and learn what you can learn 'im better than anyone in the world, Mr Melburn says. If you're a father yourself, Mr Gray,' said Moses Mendoza, wiping the tears from his eyes, 'I 'ope you'll forgive me for my 'ard 'eartedness.'

'Mr Mendoza,' said Mr Gray, and his voice was both grave and sympathising, 'your sentiments are loving and honourable. It is not often that a parent is capable of an act of abnegation so noble and unselfish. If you are resolved, there are a hundred schools in England where your son can be advanced in the manner you wish—'

'No, sir; there's only one. Your'n.'

'And perhaps,' continued Mr Gray, taking no notice of the interruption, 'I can assist you to get him into one. I can go farther, if you will allow me. Out of the loving friendship that existed between Mr Melburn and myself, I will pay for your son's education.'

Again did Moses Mendoza hold up a protesting hand. 'No, sir, I thank you all the same, but that is not what I want. You may guess from my appearance that I ain't a rich man, but I've saved up a bit of money and I've brought it with me.' He laid a little chamois leather bag on the table. 'There's a matter of a 'undred-and-seventy-eight pound in this bag, and I'll send you more as I earn it. Don't you

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fear I sha'n't do what's right by you. I don't know what you charge for board and edycation, but you shall be paid every farthing of it.'

'I will remove a misapprehension,' said Mr Gray, 'if I inform you that only six of my pupils live in the house. I admit no more than six. Even were this not the case there is an insuperable objection to the introduction of your son as a boarder here, an objection which you seem to have overlooked.'

'What is it, sir?' asked Moses Mendoza.

'The dietary laws of your race forbid it.'

'Eating and drinking, do you mean?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, that's no objection, Mr Gray,' said Moses Mendoza, with a genial laugh. 'We're not so particular as we used to be. Times are changed. As for you taking only six boarders, sir, where there's room for six there's room for seven. I put it to you. When one more than you expect sets down to dinner did you ever find yourself run short?'

Mr Gray could not prevent a smile coming to his lips. 'We will not enter into the question. Take up your money, Mr Mendoza. I assure you that at some other establishment you can give your son as good an education as is given within these walls for less than half the fees I extract from the parents of my pupils. I am a very ex-orbitant teacher.'

'Begging you a thousand pardons, sir, Raphe can't get anywhere else as good as he can get 'ere. I'll take Mr Melburn's word for that. This is 'arf way to Oxford.'

'Half way to Oxford!'

'When Raphe leaves your school, sir, he'll go to Oxford where you and Mr Melburn went. He's told me 'ow to set about it at the proper time, and I've got it at my fingers' ends. No fear of my forgetting anythink that's for Raphe's good. He'll do you credit, sir; blame me for it if he doesn't.'

'Mr Mendoza,' then said Mr Gray, 'I trust that you will acquit me of any desire to give you offence in what I am about to say.'

You can't give me offence, sir. You're a gentleman.'

'First take up your money.'

'No, sir; it's all right where it is.'

'You are very persevering.'

'I am working for my boy Raphe. What is it you was going to say, sir?'

'This. The world judges by externals, Mr Mendoza. For your son's sake I beg you to consider. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that I undertook his education, which, I may tell you, is entirely out of the question—'

'Not at all, sir, not at all,' interposed Moses Mendoza, with perfect good humour.

'It could not but be known that he was a Jew.'

'No 'arm in that, Mr Gray. He's proud of it, and so am I.'

'No harm at all. Heaven forbid that I should share the vulgar and cruel prejudices against your race—'

'You're above it, sir.'

'I trust so,' said Mr Gray, rather distracted by these interruptions. 'Or that I should fail to honour an earnest lad who is fighting in a good cause at a disadvantage. For it cannot be denied that the prejudice and the disadvantage exist. By sending your son here, or to an establishment of a similar kind, you are subjecting him to a severe ordeal. Boys are not more merciful than men, and in the young blood under my control there is the average amount of human nature. Some—I do not say all—of his fellow students would fling the prejudice into his face, would allow no opportunity to escape of inflicting humiliation upon him which would cut him to the soul. Granting that he is all you say, his sufferings would be all the greater, and I would not answer for the consequences upon a young

and sensitive spirit. Then—pray pardon me for mentioning it—the fact of your being his father would be seized upon as a means of torture.’ (This allusion to his personal appearance, made with delicacy and consideration, did not cause Moses Mendoza to flinch; he simply nodded his head rapidly several times in good-humoured, though grave, acquiescence.) ‘Would it be fair,’ continued Mr Gray, upon whom this ready and cheerful acceptance of facts made a strong impression, ‘to subject him to such an ordeal? I cannot change the nature of my boys, whose covert sneers and allusions to his faith and family connections would make every hour he was here an hour of exquisite unhappiness. Let me advise you to send him to some Jewish school where he would mingle with lads of his own race, and not be subjected to the humiliations I have pointed out; and pardon me if I have wounded you by speaking so plainly.’

‘Mr Gray,’ said Moses Mendoza, ‘before I come ’ere I thought over all you’ve said—and kindly said, sir, and kindly meant. I daresay Raphe ’d ’ave to put up with some of the things you’ve spoke of, and I daresay it wouldn’t be agreeable to ’im. But it wouldn’t last long; I’m mistook in ’im if he wouldn’t soon make friends of them as ’d be inclined at first to look down on ’im. He’s got the knack of making friends, sir, he’s got the knack of making ’isself liked and respected. As to me, sir, you can put me out of the question. Once Raphe was ’ere I wouldn’t lower him by showing myself to you or your scholars. I wouldn’t give ’em the chance of throwing mud at ’im because ’is father’s a common, low-bred man. All he wants is a chance to lift ’isself up, and that you can give ’im. Don’t run away with the idea that because I’m a Jew I think of nothink but money. I want Raphe to be rich, of course, but I want ’im to be somethink better as well. He’s got it in ’im to be somethink better; you’ll find that out for yourself before he’s with you a week. Among our people, Mr Gray, there’s plenty like me, but

there ain't many like 'im. If you used a steam pump you couldn't stuff learning into me, but Raphe takes to it like mother's milk. Just think a minute, sir. Ain't there among the Jews big painters, big book writers, big philosophers, big politicians, big lawyers, big musicians? Ah, music, Mr Gray, music! Where would music be without us Jews? I don't want to brag, sir, but we don't miss much; once we take up a thing we get to the top. That's where Raphe 'll get, but he can't do it without learning. Mark my words, Mr Gray—the day 'll come when you'll be proud to say, "Raphe Mendoza was edycated at my school." When shall I send 'im to you, sir?'

'It cannot be, Mr Mendoza, it cannot be,' said Mr Gray, affected and astonished at this amazing pertinacity. 'Take up your money, and if you will not inform me where I can see my dear friend Melburn, let us part friends.'

'That we shall always be, Mr Gray,' said Moses Mendoza, utterly ignoring the schoolmaster's emphatic remonstrances. 'Nobody could 'ave met me fairer.' And with a bow not devoid of dignity he made a swift departure.

Mr Gray was not prepared for the sudden movement; Moses Mendoza had left the room without giving him the opportunity of saying another word. And there upon the table was the chamois leather bag containing the hundred and seventy-eight pounds.

'Mr Mendoza—Mr Mendoza!' he cried, hurrying after him. But Moses Mendoza was out of the house, and Mr Gray saw him scudding through the gates as fast as his legs could carry him. When Mr Gray reached the gates and looked up and down the public road there were no signs of his late visitor. Returning to his study more slowly than he had left it, he gazed in perturbation at the bag of money, and summoned his man-servant.

'Fletcher,' he said, 'Mr Mendoza has left this bag behind him by mistake. Stop a moment—let me see if it

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is securely fastened; yes, it is quite safe. Run to the railway station, where you will probably see Mr Mendoza, and give him the bag, with my compliments, and say I sent it to him. Do not bring it back with you.'

Away went Fletcher, and returned in a few minutes with the bag in his hand.

'You did not see Mr Mendoza?' said Mr Gray, much disturbed.

'Oh, yes, I saw him, sir, and he said that you knew all about it, and that there was no mistake.'

'I expressly bade you not to bring it back, Fletcher.'

'He wouldn't take it, sir; he said it was all right. What was I to do, sir? Chuck it at his—I mean throw it at his 'ead—head?'

'No, of course you could not do that. Was he in a bad temper?'

'Not at al, sir; he was full of his jokes. He's the sort of man you can't put out.'

'Upon my word, it seems so. You can go, Fletcher.'

Seldom had he felt more helpless. As he gazed at the bag of money an odd impression stole upon him that he was in the power of a human octopus that had fastened its suckers upon him, and would not let him go. He did not know whether to laugh or be angry. What made it more embarrassing was that Moses Mendoza had left no address. Whether he liked it or not he would be compelled to keep the money till Mr Mendoza presented himself again, or communicated with him, when he was resolved to be hampered with it no longer.

At night in his bedroom he related the incident to his wife, who could not help laughing at it.

'Is that the light in which it presents itself to you?' he asked.

'It has a very humorous side,' she replied, still laughing. 'Mr Mendoza has great confidence in you.'

The Chamois Leather Bag

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‘I wish to heaven he had less.’

‘He must be a remarkable man.’

‘He is,’ said Mr Gray, with a groan. ‘A very remarkable man.’

Presently, when the lights were out, she said, ‘How he must love that boy of his!’

Mr Gray was silent.

CHAPTER IV

THE WASTED LIFE

IN a miserably-furnished attic in the poorest part of Spitalfields a man lay dying ; by his bedside stood Moses Mendoza, looking gravely down upon the form in which life was ebbing away. The doctor had been and gone, his last visit to the sick man paid.

‘There is no hope, Mr Mendoza,’ he said. ‘He will not last the night. If he asks for whisky let him have it ; it will not hurt him now.’

The friendship between Mr Mendoza and the dying man was of comparatively recent growth. The house in which they lived was let out in rooms to some half-dozen lodgers, Moses Mendoza and his son occupying the ground floor. About six months ago, an attic being to let, Mr Melburn entered into possession. He was incapable of work, and had nothing to support him except some relics of more prosperous days in the shape of books, spare clothing, and a few trinkets of little value. These he disposed of, as his necessities required, to Moses Mendoza, and it was the books that brought them into closer association. For Moses Mendoza’s son, Raphael, a quiet, studious lad, with thoughtful face and deeply-reflective eyes, had but one passion in life—books. It was with avidity he seized the volumes which his father purchased from the beggared gentleman, who one day saw him walking along a crowded street, intent upon the pages of a translation of Virgil.

Something in the boy's earnest face and absorbed attention attracted him, and he accosted Raphael, and told him it was one of his college books. They fell into conversation, and it thereafter became a custom with Raphael to spend an occasional hour or two with Mr Melburn, when the man was sober. Melburn still retained some of the charm of his old manner, and this and the desultory reading of his college days, coupled with reminiscences of Continental tours, fascinated the lad, and they became friends. Later on Melburn sank into deeper poverty, and then Moses Mendoza, observing the pleasure which Raphael took in his society, helped him along with loans of trifling sums of money without hope of repayment. Thus the friendship grew.

There were periods when for days together Raphael saw nothing of Mr Melburn, and was not admitted into his attic. These days were spent by the fallen man in secret drinking, in wrestling with the terrors of *delirium tremens*. Then, emaciated, haggard, and still more broken, Melburn would creep forth and find remorseful solace in the companionship of the earnest, pure-minded lad from whose knowledge his vice was hidden.

With Moses Mendoza the drunkard in his lucid moments conversed freely, spoke sympathisingly of Raphael's thirst for knowledge, in tones of remorse related stories of his youthful days and of the dear friend whose memory, through all his degraded career, he cherished and held most dear. Out of these confidences sprang Moses Mendoza's fixed idea that Mr Gray should undertake the education of his son, and hence his visit to that gentleman. It was to the end of giving Raphael the best education that could be obtained that he had saved and pared and pinched, denying himself every indulgence that would make the least demand upon his purse.

Many were the efforts he made to cure Mr Melburn of his last fatal vice. They were vain.

'Useless, Mr Mendoza, useless,' said the wretched dipsomaniac; 'it is too late in the day. I am a doomed man. Bear with me a little longer.'

And now on this night he lay dying in his garret, a pitiable wreck. His face was pinched and worn, his limbs shook as with palsy, and though he had barely reached middle-age he looked like an old man of seventy.

On the table were glasses, a bottle of medicine, and a bottle half filled with whisky. One feeble gaslight—the tap so fastened that it was scarcely more than a glimmer—lighted the room.

A sad, sordid picture of life, hopeless in its past, in its present, in its future. Awful was the lesson and the warning to those who tread the downward path. Thirty years ago bright sunlight shone upon this wreck. The careless grace, the gay voice, the perfect form, the graceful movements which a polished actor might have envied, wooed men and women to admiration. His presence brought a smile of gladness to the lips; and now—!

With tremulous hand he motioned towards the bottles. Moses Mendoza lifted the medicine bottle; Melburn shook his head impatiently. The kindly nurse poured some whisky into a glass, and raising the dying man into a sitting posture put it to his lips. Mr Melburn's teeth rattled against the glass as he drank; then he sank back with a long, shivering sigh.

'My curse!' he muttered. 'What devil was in my blood that made me incapable of resistance? Look there—look there! Who opened the door and let that horrible creature in?'

He spoke in snatches, a few words at a time, pausing at each short interval to catch his breath. He asked the last question in a terrified voice, rising to a screech, while his hands beat and picked at the counterpane.

'The door's shut,' said Moses Mendoza. 'There's nobody 'ere but you and me.'

'My fancy again! I've gone through a purgatory of horrors—of my own creating, of my own creating. Did the doctor say it would soon be over? You don't answer. I understand. Well, there's the end. Sit down by my side and tell me again. Gray spoke kindly of me, did he? Dear old Gray! But I wouldn't have him see me as I am if it would purchase another ten years of existence. When he saw me last—open that drawer and take out the brown paper parcel. Untie it. There's a portrait in it you've never seen. Look at it. What do you think of it?'

With some premonition of the truth Moses Mendoza glanced from the bright, laughing face in the picture to the pinched, haggard face on the pillow.

'Incredible as it seems, Mr Mendoza, it is I. That is the memory dear old Gray has of me. Tie it up again. When I am dead take it to him. It is my last legacy. I would rather have my heart torn out than that memory should be destroyed. There is something else—about your boy.'

'Yes, Mr Melburn, yes,' said Moses Mendoza, anxiously.

'The few words I wrote to him were not strong enough. How many days is it since you went to the school?'

'Ten, sir.'

'Since then, at times when I had my senses about me, I have written a few scraps which you can take when you deliver my portrait. Hold me, Mr Mendoza—keep those creatures away! I want to get this off my mind. . . . You devils! You devils! Can't you wait? If you come near me I'll tear you to pieces! . . .'

The paroxysm passed; he spoke again.

'What was I saying? I can't recollect unless I have some whisky. It is life, and it is death. Gray would never touch it. He was right. If I had listened to him—but

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what's the use? It is too late for good resolutions, too late for repentance. Do you believe in death-bed repentance? Comfortable doctrine. Gray expatiated upon it for an hour. . . . The papers are for him. Dear old Gray! You'll find them about. Don't read them. You couldn't if you tried. Put them all together in an envelope; they're for the good of your boy. Can't you find them? Two or three pieces are in the drawer, some under my pillow—and don't forget my portrait. As I was when we were at college together. If your boy ever goes to Oxford send him to Balliol. Is he really your son? I beg your pardon. He reminds me of Gray. He'll work as hard—he has the right stuff in him. My head is easier. If one could sleep now! What is death? Oblivion?'

For some little while there was no sound in the room except the heavy breathing and the mutterings of the dying man. Presently—

'Listen. There was a woman. . . . I behaved like a brute to her. She gave up all for me. . . . She loved me—great Heavens! she loved me! She came from Holt, in Norfolk. Bring that looking glass here. . . . Is this I, or a spectre? Is it possible, is it possible? Ellen her name, Ellen Mayfield. . . . I promised to marry her. It's the usual thing. My life has been full of promises. I've been very liberal with them. One day, if you come across her, ask her to forgive me. You will, eh? Good man. The world does you wrong. You are a Christian.'

'God forbid!' said Moses Mendoza.

'In the truest sense a Christian. Even a Jew may be proud of that. . . . Ellen's eyes are blue as summer cloud—I used to tell her so, and how she hung upon my words! It cannot be, it cannot be! Is that a dream, or this? Like burnished gold her hair. Ask her to forgive me. There is one thing, while I am in my senses. You promised that I should not be buried by the parish. You'll

keep your promise? Thanks—thanks—thanks. I don't know why I should be so particular about this carrion. . . . Sentimental fool! Not a single manly quality in me. Is there any more whisky? Beast that I am! There was a play I saw called "Drink." It was horrible and true. I went straight out of the theatre to the public-house opposite. The bars were full. Men and women were pouring the liquor down their throats, and saying what an awful thing drink was; and while they moralised upon the frightful end of the drunkard on the stage, they continued to fuddle their brains with the poisonous stuff. Many of them went home more than half drunk. Interpret me that, Mr Philosopher. . . . Tell Gray, dear old boy, that I loved and honoured him to the last. Is it a redeeming point? . . . What is this? Death? Oh, I'm not afraid! If not to-day, to-morrow. Where are you, Mr Mendoza? Hold me tight—you are a real friend—keep those shadows off. . . . Creeping, creeping through the walls and ceiling—the room's full of them! Can't you wait a little longer? I sha'n't be long. Stand aside—I want to see the river. Come out on the river, Gray. Dear lad, come out on the river. Good God! the boat's full of skeletons. Pitch them out! Off! off! off!

Thus for the next two hours the man babbled and raved, haunted by spectres, tortured by memories. Moses Mendoza tended him, wiped the clammy brow and the froth from the dry lips, and under his breath murmured, 'Hear, O Israel, the Eternal our God! The Eternal is One!'

He looked at his watch—an hour past midnight. In the house outside the garret all was quiet; in the dimly-lighted streets human night birds were about. From a gambling club opposite issued a score of blear-eyed, squalid aliens, their brains heated with vile liquor, their nerves quivering with the gamester's fever. An evil-looking crew, with their

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straggling beards and ill-fitting garments, their croaking voices raised in curses and ribald laughter and maledictions on bad luck. A cry rang out, 'He's got a knife!' A female voice shrieked for the police, and there was a scampering through the streets. A man stumbled along, trolling out the last new music-hall ditty; his raucous voice seemed to tear the air.

These sounds did not fall meaninglessly on Moses Mendoza's ears. He thought of his son Raphael sleeping quietly in bed downstairs. He stole from the garret and crept into the bedroom, shading with his hand the light of the candle he carried. Raphael was asleep, his face upturned, one arm curled over his head. A book which he had been reading was on a little table by the bedside; the candle had burned itself out while he read.

Moses Mendoza's face shone with tenderest love as he gazed upon his son; he stooped, and softly put his thick, coarse lips to the boy's forehead. Then, pulling the counterpane over Raphael's shoulders, he left the room as noiselessly as a cat, and returned to the attic. As he ascended the stairs, he heard a man and a woman quarrelling and swearing at each other in the streets without.

He had spoken the truth when he told Mr Gray that Mr Melburn said that Raphael had in him the makings of a gentleman and a scholar. Mr Melburn had said something more. 'There's little chance for him amidst these surroundings, Mr Mendoza. Give him his opportunity in a cleaner, purer atmosphere. Let him hear the English language spoken as it ought to be spoken, as gentlemen speak it.' Strangely enough, the man who had ruined his own life and had been unable to resist evil influence, saw clearly what would stand in the way of the earnest lad's moral and intellectual advancement. It was he who had instructed Moses Mendoza in the steps it was necessary to take in order that full scope might be given for the develop-

ment of those higher aims by which, though as yet but imperfectly understood by himself, Raphael was animated. An uneducated, ignorant man, his common breeding stamped on his good-humoured features, and expressing itself in his guttural voice, Moses Mendoza would not have known how to set about making his son a gentleman had it not been for Mr Melburn's advice. Mr Melburn had said, 'If you can persuade Mr Septimus Gray to take your son, it will be the making of him.' Why, then, of course Mr Gray must take the lad. 'When he leaves Gray,' said Mr Melburn, 'let him go to Oxford if you can afford it.' Why, then, to Oxford the lad must go. He would work double tides, he would save every penny, he would live on a crust to that end. All the hopes Moses Mendoza had in life were centred in this child of his love, who was going to make a name in the world, who was going to be what his father could never be—a gentleman. For devotion so utterly unselfish, few would have given Moses Mendoza credit; but it was in his nature. His love for his son was so firmly fixed in the fibres of his heart as to have become the dominant principle of his life.

When he re-entered the attic the dying man was babbling, for the most part incoherently, but Moses Mendoza caught a few words here and there. The terrifying images conjured up by the frenzy of drink were no longer present to distress him. All his thoughts were of his youth, of the delightful days he had spent with Gray, and through all the memories of the sweet companionship by which he had profited so little ran the vision of the silver river. 'Why grind so hard, dear lad? It is a lovely evening. Come out on the river.' This was the refrain, growing fainter and fainter with each tick of the clock. Soon the babbling ceased altogether, and with a merciful peace in his face, the man went out upon the river that flows into the sea.

CHAPTER V

VICTORY

FOUR days later Mr Gray was informed that Moses Mendoza had called again. He gave instructions that the visitor should be immediately shown into the study, which he himself very soon entered, carrying the little chamois leather bag. He found Moses Mendoza, as before, gazing reverently at the bookshelves.

'I am glad to see you, Mr Mendoza,' he said. 'Here is your property. I would have sent it on to you, but you forgot to leave me your address.'

'Ow do you do, Mr Gray?' said Moses Mendoza, taking no notice of the bag. 'I'm sorry to say I bring you bad news.'

Then Mr Gray saw that Moses Mendoza was in black, with a black band round his shabby old hat.

'My friend, Melburn,' he faltered.

'He's gone, sir. He was buried yesterday.'

'Poor Melburn—poor Melburn!' said Mr Gray, sinking into a chair. 'Did he pass away in peace?'

'He did at the last, sir.'

'Who was with him when he died?'

'Only me, sir.'

'Had he no other friends?'

'He never spoke of none. No one ever come to see 'im. I never knew 'im speak to anybody but me and Raphe.' 'He died on Monday.'

'At what time?'

'It was about two in the morning.'

'You remained with him all night, Mr Mendoza? Yes? It was very kind of you.'

'He was kind to my boy, Mr Gray. Besides, it wasn't safe to leave him alone.'

'Why?'

'I think I may tell you now the poor gentleman's gone, for he *was* a gentleman though he'd come so low.'

'Yes, tell me all. Take a seat, Mr Mendoza.'

'Thank you, sir. When he took a garret in the 'ouse I live in—'

'A garret?'

'He couldn't afford better. It soon got to be known what 'is complaint was.'

'The complaint he died of?' Moses Mendoza nodded gravely. 'What was it, Mr Mendoza?'

'Drink, sir. It killed 'im. That is why it wasn't safe to leave 'im alone. There was times when he was very violent, and 'ad to be 'eld down by force. I was afraid that would 'appen when he died. It was a 'appy thing that he died in peace.'

Mr Gray was greatly shocked. 'That was the reason, I suppose, that he would not see me.'

'That was the reason, Mr Gray. He didn't want you to see 'ow much he'd altered. He said he'd rather 'ave 'is 'eart torn out. That shows 'ow deeply he felt it. He wanted you to think of 'im always as you knew 'im when you and 'im was together.'

'He was very poor, you say?'

'As poor as poor can be.'

'Did he leave no money at all?'

'A very few coppers, Mr Gray.'

'Then who paid the expenses of his funeral? The parish? I could have spared him at least that humiliation.'

'He was spared it, sir. The parish didn't bury 'im. He 'ad the same 'orror of it as you 'ave.'

'Do you mean to tell me that you paid the expenses of his funeral?'

'I didn't mean to tell you, Mr Gray.'

'Mr Mendoza!' exclaimed Mr Gray, and held out his hand, which Moses Mendoza cordially took.

'He arsked me to bring you 'is portrait. 'Ere it is, sir. I shouldn't 'ave known it to be 'im if he 'adn't told me. You was the last thought in 'is mind. He kep' on whispering your name, and that it was a lovely evening, and wouldn't you come out on the river. Not a word about anythink else. I've brought a few other things he left behind 'im, you being 'is nearest friend. In this envelope there's some bits of writing he wanted you to 'ave. 'Ere's 'is pipe and 'is old tobacco pouch; and I found this old pocket-book in 'is coat pocket. I 'aven't opened it, Mr Gray. I thought you'd like to 'ave 'em.'

'I should. It is most considerate of you.' He opened the pocket-book, and it was with surprise he took from it some old letters of his own which his dead friend had treasured. Tears came to his eyes as he gazed at them. Moses Mendoza rose.

'With your leave, Mr Gray, I'll go out for a bit of a walk and 'll come back in an hour or so. You might wish to say somethink to me after you've looked through 'em.'

He did not wait for a reply, but quietly left the room. When he was gone Mr Gray observed that the chamois leather bag was still on the table.

There were six or seven letters in the pocket-book, all, with the exception of one, written to Melburn in the days of their youth. He had a retentive memory, and it needed not the opening of the flood-gates of the past to bring to his mind under what circumstances they had been written. They teemed with affection, and this, he felt, was why they

had been treasured; for he remembered letters of another kind, in which he had remonstrated with his friend for the wild life he was living, and these had been destroyed. Laying them aside he opened the letter which had not been written to Melburn.

It was a letter to Melburn's father, thanking him for his assistance in defraying the expenses of his college education. He read this with grave attention, and paused long over sentences here and there in which his gratitude was strongly expressed: 'It is to you, dear sir, that I shall owe what success in my future life it may be my happiness to achieve.' 'But for your generous help the whole course of my life would have been changed, and I should have had to bid farewell to my dearest hopes.' 'My father has written to you in the same spirit, I am sure, in which I now write. He feels no less deeply than I the sweet burden of gratitude under which you have laid us. It may be that I shall be able to show my sense of your goodness by furthering some wish of my dearest friend, your son, whom I love.' This was the tone of the letters all through. It was through Melburn's love for him that he had attained his honoured position as a great teacher.

Laying the letter with the others he opened the envelope containing the 'bits of writing' which Melburn had desired Moses Mendoza to bring to him. They were the merest fragments, on odd pieces of paper, and the tremulous handwriting was a painful indication of the state to which his friend had been reduced through his excesses. Disjointed and rambling as they were, their purport was unmistakable. They told of Moses Mendoza's kindness to the broken man; of Mendoza's son Raphael, 'an earnest, studious lad, who reminds me often of you, dear Gray'; of the lad's heartfelt wish to obtain entrance to a good school, and of the father's no less heartfelt wish that his son should be suitably equipped for an honourable career;

and then he begged his friend Gray, in memory of the loving ties that once united them, to give the poor lad the opportunity which would be the means of lifting him above the common sordid calling pursued by his father.

Mr Gray glanced from this pathetic letter to the chamois leather bag containing the hundred and seventy-eight pounds which Moses Mendoza had saved up, and rang the bell for Fletcher.

'Has Mr Mendoza come back, Fletcher?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Say that I wish to see him.'

Moses Mendoza entered with an expression of anxiety on his good-humoured face.

'Mr Mendoza,' Mr Gray said, 'I have been reading the letters in the pocket-book you were thoughtful enough to bring to me, and also the last letter which my poor friend wrote to me. It is, in effect, a request that I receive your son as a pupil, and I gather that he wishes the lad to live in the house. As you do yourself.'

'As I do myself, sir,' said Moses Mendoza. 'He mustn't remain with me; I shall drag 'im down.'

'I am not so sure of that. But I owe my dear friend a debt which I shall be glad to pay, and it seems I can do it in no other way than by complying with his wish.'

'You'll take Raphe, sir?' said Moses Mendoza, his voice trembling.

'I will receive your son, Mr Mendoza, and if he is at all what you and my dead friend say he is, I will undertake his education.'

'I can't speak, sir. I don't know what to say, except God bless you!'

'Send him to me some time during the present month, and let me know beforehand the hour and date of his arrival. And now take up your money, Mr Mendoza; there will be no fees to pay.'

'Begging your pardon, Mr Gray, I must leave the money, and you must charge me what you charge the others. I couldn't abear that Raphe shouldn't be paid for. It ain't that I'm proud' (which was not exactly the truth), 'but it 'd look like charity, and when Raphe's a man it might 'urt 'is feelings. I shall be be'olden to you just the same, sir; you're doing for me what no other man in the world can do, and I shall be thankful to you all the days of my life.

'You are resolved, Mr Mendoza?'

'Yes, sir, I am, and I 'ope I 'aven't offended you.'

'No, Mr Mendoza, you have not offended me. For the present, then, we will let the matter rest where it is. May I offer you a glass of wine and a biscuit?'

He rang the bell and gave the order. Wine and biscuits were brought, and Mr Gray, filling two glasses, inclined his head courteously, and raised one to his lips. He barely tasted the wine, it not being his habit to drink in the day-time. Then he turned to the bookselves to give his guest time to partake of the refreshment. Presently, glancing at the table, he saw that Moses Mendoza had not drank the wine, and that the tears were running down his face.

'Mr Mendoza!'

'Don't mind me, don't mind me. It's the parting from my son, sir—!'

CHAPTER VI

CAST THY BREAD ON THE WATERS

DURING the following three or four years Moses Mendoza lived a life of poverty in Spitalfields, and lived it cheerfully. It was with no sense of self-sacrifice that he deprived himself of all but the barest necessities, in order that he might pay the fees for Raphael's education. Not a labourer in England worked harder or longer hours than he, not a man in the world rose in the morning with a more cheery spirit, nor laid his head upon his pillow more contentedly. A joke and a smile ever on his lips, a jovial twinkle ever in his eyes. In his waking and sleeping dreams the happiest future spread itself before him, and in these dreams one bright figure which threw all others into the shade—the figure of the son so dear to his heart.

The reports from Mr Gray respecting Raphael's progress contributed to his happiness. There was no mention of the disadvantages to which Mr Gray had referred ; the lad was getting along famously, and was a favourite with all the pupils in the school ; he was most attentive to his studies, and was marching steadily and surely to the front rank. 'He is developing qualities which I greatly admire,' wrote Mr Gray. 'He is manly, truthful and straightforward, the kind of lad who is incapable of a mean action. I congratulate you upon having a son so worthy.' At another time : 'I have bright hopes of him. If he continues to progress as he has progressed this last term there is little doubt that he will be at the head of the school.' 'Where else should

he be?' chuckled Mozes Mendoza, walking up and down his meanly-furnished room, his heart beating with joy.

He did not present himself again at the school. Mr Gray understood and appreciated his motive; he would not humiliate his son by the intrusion of his personality. 'It is not only a fatherly act,' said Mr Gray to his wife, 'but it is the act of a philosopher of the world; and,' he added, 'an act of delicacy which would do honour to a gentleman. He never could have heard of Chilon the ephor, but he has intuitively mastered the profound meaning of the wise saw, "Know thyself."'

Raphael came home at vacation time, and Moses Mendoza thrilled with pride as he noted the improvement in his son's manners, and listened to glowing accounts of successful examinations and honours won. Moses Mendoza never wearied of these accounts; he could not hear them often enough.

Certain matters affecting his father were also noted by the observant lad. The shabby, second-hand clothes he wore, growing shabbier each successive visit, the efforts he made to conceal his poverty, the cheerful acceptance of the *role* he had assigned to himself; nothing escaped the loving eyes of the son. Moses Mendoza was careful to provide his son with sufficient pocket money; his own purse had never a spare shilling in it. He would not allow Raphael to wear clothes obtained from a ready-made clothier; for himself anything was good enough, but not for the lad, whose garments must be made by a West-End tailor. In the second year of Raphael's residence with Mr Gray he, being home for the vacation, went with his father to a fashionable tailor to be measured for a new outfit. The selection of the cloth was a matter of grave discussion and deliberation; as was also the cut, which of course must be of the latest modern fashion. Raphael's business satisfactorily arranged, he requested the cutter to measure his father for a new suit.

Moses Mendoza protested; Raphael insisted, rattling the money in his pocket and saying he would pay for it. With an inward groan Moses Mendoza submitted.

Alone with his son, he said with a half-frightened air,—

‘You are not ashamed of me, Raphe?’

‘Ashamed of you, father!’ exclaimed Raphael, throwing his arm round his father’s neck and kissing him. ‘When it comes to that I shall not deserve to live.’

Upon Raphael’s return to school Moses Mendoza folded up his new suit very carefully, and put it at the bottom of a drawer with some camphor to protect it from the moths, until Raphael’s next visit home, when he met the lad at the station arrayed like a gentleman. He was not quite at his ease, partly because he was afraid that the smell of camphor would lead to detection, and partly because he was afflicted with remorse at the idea that he was robbing his son.

The time was soon to come, however, when he was to be no longer tormented by such thoughts as these; a wondrous change took place in his fortunes.

There was a boom in South African affairs, which caused the old discoveries of gold in California and Australia to pale their ineffectual fires. It set all England mad; the Stock Exchange was frantic with excitement. A Jewish lad, born in the East End of London, Whitechapel way, who had gone out to South Africa in the steerage, and landed there with fourpence in his pocket, came home first-class, and set up his carriage. Another followed suit; and another. The air pulsed with golden rumours. The wonders of Aladdin’s cave were eclipsed. Time was when Tom Tiddler’s Ground lay in No-man’s Land, and lo! suddenly it flashed upon the sight with dazzling brilliancy, and heralded an era of Booms. With a capital B.

Among the fortunate ones was a young man named Israel (more familiarly Izzy) Jacobs, to whom Moses Mendoza and his wife Rebecca had been exceedingly kind. Many a

meal had this boy eaten in the house of the Mendozas, going there always when he was hungry and there was nothing for him in his own home, always sure of a welcome, and leaving the hospitable couple with words of encouragement from the elder man, a kiss from Rebecca, and a copper or two in his pocket. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters'; but what the Mendozas did for Izzy Jacobs was done out of purest kindness. The poorest Jew finds someone poorer than himself to whom he lends a helping hand; and let it be known that the milk of human kindness flows not more freely in human breast than in the breasts of the females of the Jewish race. A blessing on their comely heads for their sweet charities!

Moses Mendoza, walking along Ludgate Hill one day, was hailed by a gentleman riding alone in a carriage and pair. He looked up; the carriage stopped; out jumped the gentleman, and with beaming face held out his gloved hand to the poor pedestrian.

'What, Mr Mendoza!' he cried.

Moses Mendoza gazed a moment, then a genial smile overspread his countenance.

'Izzy Jacobs!' he exclaimed.

'That's me,' said Izzy Jacobs; he had an expensive orchid in his buttonhole, and a diamond pin from the South African mines in his cravat.

'Well, well, well!' murmured Moses Mendoza, transfixed with astonishment at the resplendent human vision and the gorgeous turn-out. 'Why, 'ow you've growned!'

'Yes, haven't I?' laughed Izzy Jacobs. 'And how are you, Mr Mendoza?'

'Blooming, Izzy, blooming,' replied Moses Mendoza.

'You don't look like it,' observed Izzy Jacobs.

'Don't I?' said Moses Mendoza, rather alarmed. 'Why, what's the matter with me?'

The Pride of Race

'Nothing, nothing,' said Izzy Jacobs, with a seeming evasion of the subject. 'How are you getting on?'

'Pretty well, Izzy; pretty well, thank you.'

'And how's Aunt Rebecca?' Thus in the old days had he been in the habit of calling Mrs Mendoza.

'God rest 'er soul!' murmured Moses Mendoza, with a trembling at the lips.

'Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry,' said Izzy Jacobs, and with genuine feeling echoed 'God rest her soul!' A pause, the horses champing their bits, the two men standing hand in hand. Then, 'But you don't ask me how I'm getting on.'

'I've 'eard somethink, Izzy. Is it true?'

'It's more than true. Look at that.' Pointing to the carriage and pair.

'Fit for a prince,' was Moses's comment.

'Ah!'

'You've made your fortune, Izzy?'

'Rather. What do you say to a million?'

'A million!' gasped Moses Mendoza.

'And another million on the top of that.'

'Good luck to you,' said Moses Mendoza, recovering himself.

'Nothing *but* good luck. Mr Mendoza, if it hadn't been for Aunt Rebecca I should never have got to South Africa.'

'Wouldn't you, Izzy?'

'No. She made a collection for me.'

'She was always doing beautiful things, Izzy.'

'She couldn't help it. She was made that way. And you—don't you remember?—you gave me the suit of clothes I went out in.'

'I remember your wishing us good-bye.'

'You sang "Cheer, boys, cheer," and Aunt Rebecca gave me a bag of sandwiches. Smoked salmon.' He smacked his lips. 'She ran after me before I'd turned the corner of

the street, and gave me something more. Three pieces of fried fish. Middle pieces. Her own frying.'

'Nobody could fry fish like my Rebecca,' said Moses Mendoza, mournfully.

'That's a fact. Jump in, Mr Mendoza.'

'I can't, Izzy. Must attend to business.'

'Hang your business! Farthings and pennies! Jump in, I tell you. There's a big thing going, and you're in it. Jump in.' He pushed Moses Mendoza into the carriage. His magnetism would have done it without the aid of physical force. Moses Mendoza had magnetism as strong as his, but just now it was in abeyance. 'To the office,' said Izzy Jacobs to the coachman, and away they rolled, Izzy lolling back, Moses Mendoza sitting upright, stiff as a poker. 'Pull this over your knees.' 'This' was a fifty-guinea rug. Their hands were under it. Moses Mendoza felt something slipped into one of his, and knew from the feel what it was. 'Don't look at it, Mr Mendoza; don't count it. Shove it in your pocket, and wait till you get home.'

'But can you spare it, Izzy?'

'Spare it! What a joke! Do you live in the old place?'

'Yes.'

'You sha'n't live there long. I'm glad I'm alive. Look here, Mr Mendoza, you've got to have pluck, you know.'

'Yes.'

'How's the boy?'

'Raphe? He's at school in the country.'

'In the country, eh? A good school?'

'The best in England.'

'That means money. How do you manage it?'

'I do manage it. Izzy, you wouldn't know 'im. He's going to the top. Latin, Greek, German, French, mathematics, and I don't know what all. The prizes he's

got! There ain't a boy in the school can 'old a candle to 'im. He wants to go to Oxford; I must manage it some'ow—some'ow.'

His voice faltered rather. Izzy Jacobs looked keenly at him—smiled—then laughed—then rubbed his hands briskly—then laughed again.

'We'll make that all right,' he said. The carriage stopped. 'Here we are, Mr Mendoza. Jump out.'

They entered the office, where a number of clerks were busy writing, and where there seemed to be a ceaseless flow of all sorts and conditions of men entering and departing. Half a dozen made a movement towards him, but he waved them off. A clerk accosted him, whispering,—

'Lord Wensbury is waiting to see you, sir.'

'Let him wait,' he said in a loud voice. 'I'm busy. Tell him I can't see him till three o'clock.'

Izzy Jacobs laughed in Moses Mendoza's face when they were alone in an inner room, the door of which he locked. The walls of this room were overlaid with thick linings of indiarubber, so that nothing that was spoken within could be heard from without. Izzy Jacobs drew his companion's attention to this peculiarity, and then said,—

'What do you think of the little chap that Aunt Rebecca made a collection for keeping a man like Lord Wensbury waiting?'

'It's turning things upside down,' replied Moses Mendoza.

'Just so. I could have had him as a director in my new company, but I had lords enough without him. He wants me to promise him an allotment. I don't think he'll get it.'

'But a lord, Izzy, Lord Wensbury!'

'I know. Friend of the bishops, moral lectures to working men and women, take care of the pennies and the pounds 'll take care of themselves, and all that sort of

thing—and I'll tell you something rich; member of the Anti-gambling Society, down on racing and music-halls, and for all that would give his boots if I'd make a pal of him. I told him yesterday I thought of running a music-hall myself, and he never turned a hair. But never mind him now. I've something to say, and no time to say it in. And as for you, Mendoza, for the next twenty-four hours you've only one thing to think about, and that is my diamond company. The prospectus will be out to-morrow morning, and we proceed to allotment the day after. Capital half a million, five pound shares. The city's agog about it. Here's an application form. I'll fill it up. Name, Moses Mendoza, address—I forget the number—thank you. Sign it.'

He spoke like an avalanche. Pen in hand, Moses Mendoza stared at the paper, on which he applied for a thousand shares, and enclosed his cheque.

'I don't keep a banking account, Izzy.'

'What's that to do with it? Time you did—and you'll have to. I'll see to the cheque. Sign. That's right. I put my initials in red ink across your signature, and the thing's done. You'll get the thousand shares. Would you like to know what you're worth?'

'Yes.'

'The shares are being dealt in before they're allotted,' said Jacobs. 'Everybody's fishing. Wait a minute.' He spoke through a telephone, and received an answer. 'They're at one and a half premium. You're worth fifteen hundred pounds.'

'Izzy! Izzy!'

'What will you do? Sell?'

The young millionaire gazed at his old friend under puckered eyebrows as he asked the question. Moses Mendoza pulled himself together. His intellectual forces and the extraordinary brain power which is the vital

essence of the Jewish race came to his aid. He began to understand that he was advised by the man who steered the good ship Diamond Company to play for a big stake.

'Will they go 'igher, Izzy?'

'They'll be at two and a half this afternoon—three perhaps—perhaps four—perhaps double that to-morrow. The tide's rising fast—Lord, how fast it's rising! All you've got to do is to watch.'

'I'll wait.'

'Good. But if they'll be three or four times the price to-morrow that they are to-day, wouldn't it be as well to have a dive at 'em this morning?'

'Ow can that be done?'

'Here's a letter to Pearce and Hedges, just round the corner in Threadneedle Street.' (He had been busy writing during the conversation.) 'It's marked "Immediate—Israel Jacobs." You won't be kept waiting a minute. They're brokers, members of the Stock Exchange, sound men. Don't have anything to do with outside brokers. Pearce and Hedges will execute any orders you give them, and no questions asked. They'll buy and sell for you. Stuff this book into your pocket and study it to-night; it will put you up to the rigs. Settling day's next Tuesday. What are you going to dabble in?'

'Your diamond shares.'

'Good again. Don't funk; these chances don't come every day in the week. And don't forget that you're not fishing for sprats—you're fishing for salmon. What's the use of sprats? Too many little bones. We never fry 'em. Now, good-bye. Mark to-day with red chalk. Come and see me to-morrow afternoon at five. I sha'n't have time to wink before then.'

He shook hands cordially with Moses Mendoza, and saw him to the door.

That night Moses Mendoza was in his room at Spital-

fields, busy over figures. He had had the most exciting day in his life, and the most eventful. Although he had been in a fever since he left Izzy Jacobs, and although the only food he had eaten was a dry biscuit, his evenly-balanced brain had steered him unerringly through the intricacies of his speculations. He had bought diamond shares at two premium and sold them at four; bought again at four and a half and sold again at five and three-quarters. In and out he had wound his way; and now he found himself with between three and four thousand pounds on the right side of his account, in addition to the ready money Izzy Jacobs had given him in the carriage. The shares had closed at six premium. If the thousand he had applied for were allotted to him—and of this he had no doubt—he would be worth ten thousand pounds. And all in a few hours. It was wonderful, wonderful—and true.

A new world had opened its doors to him. The old life of menial toil was at an end. The calm judgment, the invincible determination, the courage to dare and do, the imperturbable good temper, the wise instinct as to the trend of affairs—what might they not lead to?

He was a born financier, and here was his opportunity.

Yes, opportunity—opportunity! It was that and the right use of it that had made Mr Septimus Gray, that was making his son Raphael, and that now promised to make the loving father a wealthy man. It was but a variation of the saying that ‘there is a tide in the affairs of man which taken at the flood leads on to fortune.’ A variation with a difference, for there are many tides in each man’s affairs, and it is the systematic neglect of them that keeps men down.

Not likely that Moses Mendoza would neglect the chance which opportunity threw in his way. Naturally he wished to make money, but chiefly for Raphael’s sake. His son, a distinguished man, with an estate in the country, with a

gift of oratory which had already attracted notice in the school—why, all the world was open to him! Wild, nebulous dreams floated through Moses Mendoza's mind, dreams which he could not have set down in words. His dear son always in the front, he (who could not spell sugar without an h) always in the background, but working day and night for that son's advancement.

Within a week from this eventful day people were talking of Moses Mendoza who, by sheer force of character, occupied the foremost position in the mad scramble; and the money he had made was multiplied by ten. He did not contradict these reports. Within a month he was really thinking of buying a great estate for Raphael and settling it on him. Oxford was now assured. Raphael would take rank there with the best.

Rumours of these marvellous successes reached the ears of Mr Gray.

'You said to me upon Mr Mendoza's first visit here,' he observed to his wife, 'that he was a remarkable man. He has proved it. A more rapid and extraordinary rise in the world has never come under my observation.'

'Let us hope,' said his wife, 'that with the improvement in his fortunes will come a corresponding improvement in his manners.'

'It is, I am afraid, too much to hope for,' he responded, with a smile. 'But I thought you liked him.'

'I do. I like him very much. Still, from your descriptions of him it will not do Raphael any good to go about in his company. I am speaking for the lad's sake.'

'Raphael is safe. Bear in mind that a large fortune covereth a multitude of sins. What pleases me best in the accounts of Mr Mendoza is that there is not a word against his character.'

Something more than rumours reached Mr and Mrs Gray. Gifts of an amazing nature. For the lady a sealskin cloak,

half-a-dozen Japanese quilted dressing-gowns, quite a number of expensive dress pieces, and a diamond bracelet, the words accompanying them, 'From a grateful father for your goodness to his dear son.'

She laughed merrily.

'What on earth am I to do with them?' she said. 'I can't send them back.'

'No, I should not do that,' he answered slyly. 'If you consider them an encumbrance the cook or the housemaid might be induced to accept them.'

'You are talking nonsense. I think I might have this dress piece made up,' she said musingly, with a furtive glance at her husband. 'Silver grey—my favourite colour for a dress. The fur cloak is perfectly lovely. And I really don't see why I should not wear this.' She held out her arm, with the diamond bracelet on it.

'I call it bribery and corruption,' he said, pinching her cheek. 'By the way, a case arrived for me an hour ago—a very heavy case. Fletcher is unpacking it in the study. I hope Mr Mendoza hasn't sent me any dress pieces and diamond bracelets. We will go down and see. Oh, here is Fletcher. What is in the case, Fletcher?'

'Books, sir.'

'Books!'

He ran down to the study, and there upon the carpet were complete sets of the first editions of Thackeray and Dickens, in their original covers and bindings. Mr Gray's eyes glistened.

'Must have cost him a fortune. It was only a month ago I was saying what a treasure these original editions would be.'

'Perhaps Raphael heard you,' said Mrs Gray.

'Perhaps—perhaps. But they may not be for me. Ah, here is a piece of paper with his writing on it. "For Septimus Gray, Esq., from Mr Moses Mendoza." They

are for me! How generous! How thoughtful! I must write him a letter of very grateful thanks. A remarkable man, indeed. The most remarkable man I have ever known.'

It was at about this period that Moses Mendoza developed a chuckle. There was nothing artificial in it. It bubbled out of his exuberant good humour, his restless vitality, his ceaseless flow of high spirits. It became so marked a characteristic, and was so richly unique, that at the mere echo of it people said, 'There's Moses Mendoza,' or, 'There's Mo,' or, 'There's the old Jew,' as the humour possessed them; and if sometimes it was said with a sneer and a curl of the lip, and he had heard it so said, it would not have disturbed him in the least.

Panel the Second.—In Society

CHAPTER VII

MASKS AND FACES

SIXTEEN years have passed, and we are present at a scene in Belgravia, where we meet with the quintessence of all that is most coveted, most valued, most sought after, in the civilised life of the world's wealthiest and most wonderful city. Time was when Paris wore the crown which now rests upon London's curls. It is no longer 'See Paris, and die.' In these last years of the century London is the pleasure-hunter's Paradise.

We are in an atmosphere of roses ; the air is fragrant with their perfume. The company of the choicest. In short, *crème-de-la-crème*.

No hoarse protest from Saint Giles reaches the ears of the votaries of Saint James. The throbbings of that pregnant life, struggling for upheaval, are not visible here. If the evidence of the senses can be trusted it does not exist.

A hum of voices, chiefly feminine, toned down to a musical murmur. A shrill tone would sadly mar the prevailing harmony. Therefore, soft and sweet. Minor topics : The opera, Melba, Calvé, Jean de Reszke, the latest new picture, the latest new book (plot deliciously dangerous, the relation of the sexes, wives at a discount), the latest new comedy (rampantly immoral, quite a shock to

decency, 'but how true, my dear!'), the latest new millionaire, the great French actress and her rival the Italian. Major topics: Each other (the other out of hearing), all the scandal, and the latest new fashion in sleeves. To the indolent ear comes not a discordant note. Society's heaven spreads its fairest clouds. Artificial angels, fresh from the perfumed bath and the French maid, smile approval.

We are In Society.

A constant fluttering of lace handkerchiefs, a constant shifting of kaleidoscopic colour and varying forms of groups, the ladies' tailor-made costumes, and hats, and flowers, and feathers—a marvellous study. Footmen in black livery and powdered hair handing tea around, their movements and the entrance and departure of guests deadened by the thick velvet carpets. A nobly-furnished room, the decorations in faultless taste, every article of furniture in it, every picture, every piece of statuary, every antique gem, a tribute to the artistic mind which designed the whole. On all sides evidences of boundless wealth.

A surface picture?

At the tea table sits, or rather reclines, Lady Julia, the hostess. It cannot be said she presides at it, for it might be a hundred miles away for all the attention she bestows upon the costly china and silver thereon displayed. Young enough for joy is Lady Julia, beautiful enough for peace of heart, rich enough for the gratification of the most extravagant whim. There is nothing she can desire that money can purchase which her husband is not ready to lay at her feet. The daughter of a peer, his name in Domesday. Her age twenty-two, still in her springtime, that sweetest season of a woman's life. Yet—one glance at her lovely face gives the lie to joy and peace of heart. No sign of gratitude is apparent for the means of happiness within her reach. Weariness and disdain are depicted there. Weariness

ness of herself and of her fate, disdain, even contempt, for the mushroom company that come and go.

Yes, a surface picture.

Not only as regards herself. Few of her guests who are not tainted with frivolous feeling and scheming desire, few who are present from any sentiment of esteem or honest liking for their young hostess. In this respect there is tacit agreement between them; she cares as little for them as they for her. In another respect they differ. As to her caller's concerns, their past, their present, their future, Lady Julia is contemptuously indifferent; while *her* concerns, her past, her present, her future, are to them matters of curious interest. For some are present, the smiling bloodhounds of social scandal, who seem to see 'developments,' and are looking forward to them with malicious avidity. There is also a difference in their attitudes towards one another, inasmuch as they observe the false conventions which she openly violates. For the most part the callers have no higher aims than those which usually distinguish the votaries of Fashion and Finance. To which, as an improvement in the alliteration, might be added a third capital F to represent Folly. All the high qualities are submerged in the worship of the first two of these deities, at whose altars they prostrate themselves in adoration.

Lady Julia, the only child of the Earl of Lynwood, the six months' bride of Mr Raphael Mendoza, son and heir of the millionaire Stock Exchange speculator, Moses Mendoza, sees beneath the fair society masks which turn to her now and again, and, in scorn of them and of herself, scarcely deigns to notice their flatteries, scarcely troubles herself to reply. A languid nod is generally the limit of her acknowledgment.

There exists a wide divergence of opinion, not only among the guests who are present to-day, but in all classes

of society, high and low, as to the approximate amount of Moses Mendoza's wealth. From five to twenty millions is the range, and between these fabulous sums there is much scope for argument. But there is only one man who knows, and that is Moses Mendoza himself. Even Carpe, the solicitor whom he keeps as his private secretary—a white-faced man with an inscrutable countenance—cannot give more than a guess. Many are the attempts that are made to induce him to divulge the secret of which he is supposed to be in possession, and none are successful—for the best of all reasons ; he is not in possession of it.

The private secretaryship is a fine thing for Carpe ; his salary is two thousand a year. Everything the millionaire does is on a magnificent scale. It is only within the last few hours that, for the advancement of his dear son Raphael, he has made a move on a scale so regal and colossal as to startle and delight the whole of the Anglo-Saxon race. This move is the principal topic of discussion and comment in every one of to-day's morning and evening newspapers, and while cable messages are flashing all over the world recording the unprecedented incident, the author of it is to be seen in his usual corner on the Stock Exchange, with beaming countenance and twinkling eyes, amusing himself, if not others, with his good-humoured badinage. It is a busy day with him in more respects than one, a day that many will have cause to remember. He has his enemies and he knows it, and the smiles and winks and jovial chuckles with which he meets their attacks, invariably to their discomfiture, drive them frequently to desperation point.

This is what is happening while guests are pouring in and out of the flower-bedecked mansion of his daughter-in-law, Lady Julia. For some time past an insidious attack has been made upon certain stocks in which he is largely interested by an envious band of speculators on the Stock Exchange. The mine was artfully and secretly laid, and

the conspirators flattered themselves that he was ignorant of it.

But Moses Mendoza, speaking metaphorically, is hydra-headed and Argus-eyed, and has known all along what has been going on; and now, at the moment that they believed victory would be in their grasp, the conspirators find themselves hoist with their own petard and compelled to accept terms instead of dictating them. There is not a trace of malice or vindictiveness in the face of Moses Mendoza as the invectives of those hysterical plungers who cannot take defeat with a good grace fall upon his ears. He has no mercy upon them; he makes them pay handsomely, as they would have made him pay had the victory been theirs. Two or three of the weakest ones declare they will be 'hammered' rather than submit to his exorbitant demands.

'Very good, very good,' he says banteringly, 'be 'hammered; it won't 'urt me. 'Ow clever you thought yourselves! But don't be downcast. Better luck next time, you know. Try agin—try agin.'

'Damn him!' they mutter. 'He has no bowels. He's made of steel.'

He is not. He has a heart as tender and sympathetic as a woman's. It is simply that in these battles in which he has been engaged now a good many years, receiving many a hard knock cheerfully, he plays the part of a wise and skilful general who understands that the fruits of victory will be lost if he does not push the victory home; he is awake to the fact that he is surrounded by vultures who will swoop down upon him and tear him to pieces the moment he shows the least sign of weakness. He shows none. He has the game at his fingers' ends, and knows every move on the board, can play them blindfold indeed.

For the shrewd calculation of chances, for the instantaneous resource when a difficulty unexpectedly presents itself, for the spirit in which he accepts the issue, he has not his

equal among the myriad hungry scramblers for other people's money who haunt the purlieus of Threadneedle and Throgmorton Streets. He is one of the few men who are not wise *after* the event. Cool head, clear brain, never in a fever. From the day he met Izzy Jacobs until the present time his career has been an unbroken triumphant climb up the ladder of wealth. There is little he has touched in the way of speculation that has not turned to gold. It is a common saying, 'Old Moses Mendoza has a lucky touch,' and the public believe in him and follow him.

Numbers of persons in the world of fashion regard his presence in their set as a vulgar intrusion; none the less do they fawn upon him, and in financial matters they follow him blindly. His name on a prospectus is a sufficient guarantee; up go the shares like magic.

In one respect Moses Mendoza stands apart from other common men who suddenly flash forth as millionaires, and for a period dazzle the world of finance.

In this age of thieving 'promoters' and titled guinea-pigs, no more astonishing anomaly than Moses Mendoza can be found, for he never takes up a doubtful concern, and his companies do not collapse when all the plums have been picked out.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TWO PORTRAITS

ON this afternoon a Cabinet Minister, with departmental cares stamped on his countenance, lingered a moment outside Burlington House, and then passed into the Academy. Before entering the rooms he inquired of an attendant if Mr Curran had been to the Academy that day, and was informed that he was then in one of the galleries.

‘He has been here only a few minutes, sir,’ said the attendant.

The Cabinet Minister nodded. ‘If he leaves before I do, let him know that I am within and have been inquiring for him.’

‘I will, sir.’

The Cabinet Minister went from one gallery to another looking for the gentleman he wished to see, and found him standing on the edge of a knot of people who were crowding round and about the principal attraction in the Academy—two portraits, one of a lady, the other of a gentleman. So thick was this crowd, and so anxious were the gazers not to be dislodged from their positions, that it was an exceedingly difficult matter to obtain a sight of the pictures, and numbers of people had to pass on unsatisfied. Mr Curran was listening to the comments that were passed upon the portraits, and the Cabinet Minister heard one lady say in a loud voice,—

‘So that’s Beauty and the Beast, is it?’

The portrait of Lady Julia was not only the popular but the artistic success of the exhibition, and the contrast between the lovely face and that of Moses Mendoza, next to

which it was hung, was so marked as to be almost dramatic. Refinement, sensibility and delicacy in the lady's; vulgarity, *gaucherie*, and a certain unpleasant cunning in the gentleman's. Romney might have painted the one, Teniers the other. People looked at their catalogues again and again to satisfy themselves that they were the work of one hand. There was, however, no mistake. Curran, R.A., had painted both pictures.

All the sweetest points were brought out in the face of Lady Julia; all the coarsest in that of Moses Mendoza. High and low breeding were never more faithfully represented. With loving care, with a true sense of beauty and of all that is most beautiful in the human form, the artist had painted the former; with brutal fidelity he had painted the latter. To a stranger's mind the title, 'Beauty and the Beast,' which had been bestowed upon them, was not inappropriate.

From the knot of people gazing at the portraits came laughter, exclamations of amusement and joking remarks, not all of them complimentary to Lady Julia nor condemnatory of Moses Mendoza. Some indeed were disposed to regard him with awe, and to wonder how the unique position he held in the world of finance could have been gained by so coarse and common a man. The tone of the remarks ran: 'Well she got what she bargained for.' 'Good humour bubbles out of his face, I'll say that of him.' 'My dear creature, it's quite natural; everything in the world has its price.'

Mr Curran turned and saw the Cabinet Minister standing by his side.

'Ah, Percival,' he said.

'I have been seeking you,' said the Right Hon. W. Percival, as they shook hands; 'I called at the studio, and was informed you were to be found here.' His eyes wandered to the two portraits and back to the artist. 'There

is an indirect connection between those portraits and the subject I wish to talk about.'

'Yes?' said Mr Curran, with a sidelong glance at his friend; and then, 'You have seen the pictures before?'

'No. This is my first visit to the Academy. I was too unwell to attend the private view or the dinner, and have been too busy since.'

'Anything to say about them?' asked Mr Curran, smiling.

'The juxtaposition is significant.'

'In what way significant?'

'Old stones in new settings,' remarked Mr Percival.

'Capital phrase. I shall remember it.'

'How did it come about that they are placed side by side?'

'I fear I am responsible for that. But let us talk outside. Are you going anywhere in particular?'

'I intended to call upon Lady Julia.'

'That is my intention. It is a beautiful day; we will walk there. Is yours a political call?'

'Of course I should like to win the Mendozas on our side.'

'Of course. Between Downing Street and the studio, give me the studio.'

'Yours is the happier state,' said the Cabinet Minister, with a half sigh. 'You were at Birchester yesterday.'

'Yes, more by accident than by design; I returned to London this morning. I did not regret being there, for I witnessed some remarkable scenes. Besides, I take a great interest in Raphael Mendoza's career. My son and he were at Oxford together. Let us turn into the park, out of sight and hearing of those street boys.'

Two boys, with flaming placards over their arms, and bundles of newspapers in their hands, were bawling out, 'Latest news from Birchester! Moses Mendoza's gift to the nation! Noble patriotism! Portraits of Moses Mendoza and Lady Julia!'

A shadow rested on the countenance of the Cabinet Minister, and he hurried on. Mr Curran stopped to buy a paper.

'A sign of the times,' he observed, joining his friend and unfolding the newspaper. 'A future legislator, perhaps, one of those ragged bawlers.'

'Who can tell?' assented the Cabinet Minister, casting his eyes on the picture in the paper which Mr Curran pointed out to him. 'Abominable! abominable!'

'An infringement of copyright,' said Mr Curran. 'But what can one do?'

The picture was a caricature of the two portraits in the Academy, Lady Julia being represented as a simpering angel, Moses Mendoza as an orang-outang. Beneath the picture was the quotation, 'Look here upon this picture and on this.' The artist tore the paper to pieces, and dropped them behind him, saying as he did so, 'To take notice of the caricature would only make matters worse.'

'Before we speak of what is in my mind,' said the Cabinet Minister, 'let me hear the story of your two portraits. All sorts of versions are afloat.'

'There is only one true version, and it is very simple. In the first place, Mr Raphael Mendoza asked me to paint the portrait of his wife. It is a portrait I had long wished to paint, for Lady Julia is one of the most beautiful women in England, and it gives me delight to put a lovely face on my canvas. He spoke of terms, and I mentioned them—three thousand guineas. With the remark that he was greatly obliged to me he sat down and wrote a cheque for the amount. A charming way of doing business, was it not?'

'Yes, charming.'

'To my surprise Lady Julia was not very complaisant—raised objections—did not wish her portrait to be painted, even by Curran, R.A., etc., etc., etc. I did not succeed in

overcoming her objections, but her father, the earl, stepped in, and it was at his persuasion that she consented. She gave me very few sittings, but I was satisfied with my work. I have seldom produced a happier picture. Do you consider it good ?’

‘In every way admirable. My height enabled me to see over the heads of the people gathered before it.’

Curran, R.A., caressed his moustache. He was a great artist, but even a great artist may have his small vanities.

‘The sittings were concluded,’ continued Mr Curran, ‘and the picture nearly finished, when Lady Julia’s father-in-law, Mr Moses Mendoza, called upon me with a request that I would also paint his portrait. It happened that I had time to spare before the opening of the Academy, and the subject tempted me. Delighted as I am to put a lovely woman on my canvas, I take a keen pleasure in painting a man who has strong, coarse character in his face. Mr Moses Mendoza has such a face.’

‘He has. Curran, we are old friends, and I may take a liberty with you.’

‘Go on.’

‘I have observed that with beautiful women you bring out all that is most captivating in them. You do not present one expression, but you seem to convey and blend in the face all the most charming expressions which make up the sum of her perfections. The consequence is that you never fail to please your feminine sitters.’

‘So it is said.’

‘I have heard that you always refuse to paint plain women.’

‘It is true. I will not depict female ugliness. I am a worshipper of loveliness in woman.’

‘On the other hand,’ pursued the Cabinet Minister, ‘the

keen pleasure you confess you take in painting a coarse masculine face results in your putting on the canvas all that is most objectionably coarse in the man. And, as a consequence, it is very rarely, if ever, that you please your male sitters.'

'You have hit it,' said Mr Curran, in a light tone. 'I recall certain notable achievements on those lines, and some comic encounters with wives and daughters of the maligned. And yet,' he added, more seriously, 'not entirely maligned. The likenesses were unmistakable.'

'Which did not improve matters,' said the Cabinet Minister, laughing.

'No, it did not improve matters. However, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I invariably warned my victims beforehand. "Go to so-and-so," I said to them, "he will give you much greater satisfaction than I." My advice was never taken; they rushed on to their doom. I warned Mr Moses Mendoza; I told him of my fatal propensity. "You will see a very ugly presentment of yourself if you put yourself in my hands," I said. "I *am* ugly," he replied; "you can't make me uglier than I am." "All your friends will laugh at you," I said. "Let 'em laugh," he chuckled. "The more they laugh the better I shall like it." What can you do with such a man? It seems that he had set his mind upon having his portrait painted by the same hand that painted his noble daughter-in-law, as he calls her, and that it should be hung by the side of hers in the Academy.'

'A piece of malice.'

'Not at all. There is no more malice in that man's nature than there is in these rose trees. He is a lump of good nature and good temper, and he believed that his little project would please Lady Julia. "Well," thought I, "he ought to know her ladyship better than I." He brought with him a cheque for five thousand guineas. "I am not such a pleasant subject as my noble daughter-in-law," he

said, "and I hope you will excuse me for making it five instead of three." I forgave him, and pocketed the cheque. I was tempted and I fell. Alas, how history repeats itself!

'Is that all?'

'No. The tragic part is to come. It transpired that Lady Julia was not aware of her father-in-law's intentions, and that the portrait was painted without her knowledge. She was present at the private view, and when she saw the two portraits side by side all the colour died out of her face. Whatever may have been her thoughts she gave no utterance to them, but passed out of the gallery in silence. I was present at the scene; she took no notice of me, and from that day has not entered the Academy.'

'You have seen her since?'

'Oh, yes, and have spoken to her on the subject, without eliciting a single word from her in reply. I fear she is deeply offended. Needless to say, I greatly regret it.'

'Does it occur to you,' asked the Cabinet Minister, 'that her intimate association with Mr Moses Mendoza is disagreeable to her?'

'That is putting it much too mildly. The episode I have narrated has caused me to observe them rather closely since its occurrence, and I have come to the conclusion that she has a strong aversion to him.'

'It could scarcely have been otherwise. The social chasm that divides them cannot be bridged over. Think of the difference in the homes in which they were born and brought up, think of their early training. She with her patrician views and instincts, he steeped in his sordid life. She has artistic tastes; what kind of tastes has he? The poles are not more divergent than those two personalities.'

'Well, they are at odds. The question is, which is the stronger personality of the two?'

The Pride of Race

'It is an interesting contest. One must yield.'

'Lady Julia will not. You know what women are.'

'Which side does her husband take?'

'Ah, that is a question I cannot answer. He gives no sign that I have seen. It is to be borne in mind that, from a monetary point of view, the young couple and the old earl owe everything to Moses Mendoza, and that he holds the key to the situation. Your phrase, "Old stones in new settings," haunts me. It is so peculiarly applicable to the case in point. Lady Julia, member of one of our oldest families, her lineage noble and historic, married to the son of an uneducated Jew of enormous wealth, whose ancestors—'

'Were perhaps princes in the House of Israel,' interposed the Cabinet Minister, his chivalrous instinct for fair play overcoming his prejudices. 'We must not forget that there are indigent Jews living in the poorest quarters of the city whose ancestry outvies the noblest of ours.'

'Therefore,' said Mr Curran, with an assenting nod, 'old stones in new settings. There are yawning breaches in our patrician ranks, growing wider every year, and through these breaches creeps the millionaire from Chicago and Jerusalem. What becomes of the pride of race, and what is to be the end of it all?'

'The survival of the fittest,' replied the Cabinet Minister, somewhat moodily.

'Which is the fittest?'

'Can you doubt?' asked the Cabinet Minister, with knitted brows.

'I can, and do. Time will resolve the problem for us. There is no alternative but to wait.'

'And watch,' said the Cabinet Minister.

'And submit,' added the artist.

The Cabinet Minister made a wry face, and two or three minutes elapsed before his equanimity was restored.

During this interval their attention was drawn to two figures strolling a little ahead of them, one of a gentleman some thirty years of age, the other of a woman eight or ten years younger than he.

Their attire denoted that they occupied different stations in life. The man was faultlessly dressed, the woman decently but more humbly. The assertion in his bearing that he was a gentleman was clear and unmistakable—there was in it, indeed, a certain arrogant and supercilious pronouncement of the same; and it was equally clear in her bearing that she was aware of the difference in their stations, and timidly and pathetically acknowledged it. She seemed to be making some appeal to him, and he to be receiving the appeal with mingled annoyance and indifference.

The Cabinet Minister and the artist slackened their pace, the simultaneous movement arising from the unexpressed desire not to draw upon themselves the attention of the couple before them.

‘Vivian St Maur,’ said the Cabinet Minister. ‘Lady Julia’s cousin.’

‘And the woman?’ queried the artist.

His companion shrugged his shoulders. At the same moment they saw Vivian St Maur make an impatient gesture, and hurry onward. He was soon out of sight. The young woman gazed after him a few moments with irresolution in her attitude, and then turned and walked dejectedly in the direction of the two gentlemen. As she passed them, they saw that her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivering.

‘Poor girl!’ said the artist, gazing after her. ‘Poor child! An hour of false happiness to be paid for by years of sorrow!’

There was a momentary silence; then the Cabinet Minister said,—

‘Let us now speak of the election doings in Birchester, and of the part Mr Moses Mendoza played in it. The papers have enough to say about it, but your personal description will lead me to a more correct view of the situation.’

CHAPTER IX

MOSES MENDOZA'S GIFT TO THE NATION

'As I told you,' Mr Curran commenced, 'it was by accident I found myself in Birchester. Two days ago I happened to be staying in a house some thirty miles away, where the election was one of the topics of conversation. There was also some talk there of the Mendozas and Lady Julia. Being curious to hear young Mr Mendoza address a public meeting I wired to him, and he replied, inviting me to spend the night with him in Birchester. For that purpose I broke my journey home. You may not know that he possesses quite a remarkable gift of oratory.'

'I have heard so.'

'My son, who was a member of a debating club in Oxford, in which his friend, Raphael Mendoza, was a bright, particular star, had spoken to me in enthusiastic terms of his friend's great reputation as an orator and debater, and it seems to have been the firm belief in Oxford that he would one day make his mark in the House; for it was his ambition even then to enter Parliament. From what I was told and read in the papers concerning the coming election there appeared not to be the least chance of his success. Birchester, I learned, had returned a Conservative member from time immemorial, and by majorities so large that in many instances no opposition candidate was put forward by the Liberal party. Two or three of the papers that fell into my hands spoke of Mr Raphael's pretensions in very

scathing terms, and told him he had better have stayed at home.'

'With all my heart I wish he had,' said the Cabinet Minister.

'No doubt you do—now. Your candidate, Lord Peterson, is a well-known public man, is a local magnate, and exceedingly popular in Birchester; and the member who last represented the place was returned by a majority of close upon two thousand. These circumstances all pointed to the hopelessness of Raphael Mendoza's candidature, and I said as much to him when we met on the evening before the polling day. "All true," he said. "I have invited you here to witness my defeat." There was not a trace of despondency in his face at the hopeless task upon which he was engaged. "Then what on earth," I asked, "induced you to come forward as a Liberal candidate in this Conservative hot-bed?" He laughed. "In the first place," he answered, "it was a forlorn hope, and I delight in a fight with all the odds against me. In the second place, it is a bye-election, and there is always a chance in a bye-election. In the third place, the party asked me, and I wasn't going to refuse; we shall be satisfied if we reduce the majority. In the fourth place, it is good practice, and I must accustom myself to disappointments and defeats. In the fifth and chief place, my father wished me to come forward." This young man's love for his father, whom so many despise, is one of the most admirable traits in his character. I confess that his loyalty, his devotion, and his apparent blindness to his father's defects, surprised me, and it surprised me, also, that a man so astute and far-seeing as old Mr Mendoza should have sent his son to waste his powers in a battle which, in the judgment of every politician in the country, was lost before it was fought. You, for instance, had no doubt of the result?'

'Not the slightest,' replied the Cabinet Minister. 'We

did not, indeed, expect there would be a contest, and the candidature of Mr Raphael Mendoza gave us not a moment's uneasiness. There was also a certain element in the case which made the appearance of this particular young gentleman in the arena an act of still greater temerity. Some parts of the constituency—it embraces a wide extent of country, and the outlying districts are scattered and far apart; that is why the precise state of the poll cannot be declared until to-day—well, some parts of the constituency are violently anti-Semitic. There exists there a deeply-rooted prejudice against the Jewish race.'

'He mentioned this and advanced it as another inducement for coming forward. In spite of all these disadvantages he had a confident hope of reducing your latest majority by a hundred or two.'

'You heard him address a public meeting?'

'I did, and I wish you had been with me. He spoke at four meetings that night, and I attended them all, and prepared to be bored. I have never been more mistaken. Instead of being bored I was captivated. Conservative as I am, I felt rather shamefaced at the strength of the indictment he brought against our party. He marshalled the facts in a masterly manner, and proceeded from point to point with almost convincing logic. As he went on I saw doubt in the faces of many who intended to vote against him; I feel certain not all of them did so.'

'Of course, he had prepared his speech.'

'He had not. He spoke without notes, and never hesitated for a word. The meetings were packed with enemies who hurled abuse at him, and used every tricky effort to bring him to confusion. They did not succeed. He met their attacks with such admirable good-temper, he replied to their howling questions with such wit, *esprit*, resolution, and tact, that in the end he silenced them, and by sheer force of intellect compelled them to give him

respectful attention. This is what happened at all his meetings. "Lord, Lord!" I heard one old man say, "why isn't he on our side?" I felt that way myself. My son's praises of his oratorical gifts were not exaggerated. He is a born orator; he has the gift of Gladstone and John Bright, and is as powerful a reasoner as I have ever listened to. What is more, he can talk down to the audiences he is addressing; his eloquence paints things that are familiar to them in the language with which they are familiar. It was rather a misfortune for you that your candidate, Lord Peterson, could not bring himself down to their level; he spoke above their heads. Raphael Mendoza possesses in a marked degree a quality that cannot be over-estimated, a quality without which no actor was ever great—magnetism. He compels your attention, he holds you in thrall. Percival, he is a power to be reckoned with. I am much mistaken if you do not find him a thorn in your side.'

'He will meet with more than his match in the House,' said the Cabinet Minister.

'I doubt it. I must contrive to be there when he makes his maiden speech. He is so quick at repartee, so alert and witty in his replies to unexpected questions, and so logical and impressive, that I regard his success as assured. At one moment you are listening to him with earnest attention; you doubt your own established convictions; he has magnetised you. At another moment you burst into laughter at some happy witticism made at your expense. It is the kind of thing that tells in the House, the members of which are as appreciative and enthusiastic over a good hit as boys in a cricket field.'

'He will be cordially welcomed,' said the Cabinet Minister. 'I can say with your old man, "Lord! Lord! why isn't he on our side?" But it will be a long day before his party comes into power.'

'Don't be over-confident. The Liberal party at present

is like a box of matches spilled on the floor, but there have been plenty of harlequin tricks in the world of politics—splits, factions, rumblings in the bowels of Vesuvius, which suddenly bursts into flames.'

'Of course, of course. Come now to the election day, and the way the battle was turned.'

'Notwithstanding that the party was prepared for defeat,' Mr Curran continued, 'the election machinery was in perfect order, the agents and committees and sub-committees in their places, the incessant arrival of telegrams and messengers from the outlying districts, and a special body of men under a competent leader in constant communication with Moses Mendoza and his agents in London. Mr Raphael was everywhere at once, bright and cheery, comporting himself more like a successful than an unsuccessful candidate. At noon he was told that he was in a minority of six hundred, at one o'clock in a minority of eight hundred, at two o'clock of a thousand. The Conservative agents were jubilant, and predicted a much larger majority than at the last election. Seemingly this had no effect upon Raphael Mendoza, who gave them smile for smile. If any of his party showed despondency he rallied them and bade them put a good face on the matter. "We shall not win this time," he said, "but we may the next—or the next—or the next." He and his rival, Lord Peterson, met several times, Lord Peterson beaming, Raphael Mendoza no less cheerful. He smiled alike on friend and foe, and made friends with one and all. "He's a rare plucky one," said many a man, and as for the women, they were all in love with him. Now we arrive at the dramatic moment. It was three o'clock; the poll was to close at eight; Lord Peterson had already a majority of over twelve hundred. And all this time Raphael Mendoza had gone on fighting in the most admirable spirit, cheering his supporters, joking with his opponents,

and never for a single moment showing the white feather.

‘Suddenly an amazing change took place in the state of affairs—it was like a transformation scene. As though in obedience to the waving of a magician’s wand the streets were invaded by a shoal of bill-stickers, who set to work at once covering every available inch of wall space with huge posters; placards of a similar kind were put into all the shop windows; and boys in the streets were giving away bills by the hundred, by the thousand, by the hundred thousand. They seemed literally to fly in the air and to carpet the roads and pavements. Vans and carts were being driven along, all decorated with the flaming posters. Men, women and boys rushed into the streets, and followed the vans and stood at their doors, hooraying. The bills and posters were all printed alike in colours of red, white and blue, and on all of them was printed, in larger or smaller type, an announcement to the effect that Mr Moses Mendoza presented to the nation, as a free gift, the great battleship, the *Invincible*, which for two years past the eminent firm of Shattock Brothers had been building for him. As you know, great curiosity has been evinced as to his reason for the building of this wonderful ship. As a rule such ships are built by governments, not by private individuals, and whether Mr Mendoza gave the order for some such purpose as the present will probably never be known.

“‘In speed and guns,” so ran the bills and posters, “the *Invincible* will be the swiftest and the most deadly battleship on the seas. Our present Government are going too slow. We are surrounded by enemies ready and eager to pounce upon us. We must be prepared—and prepared without the culpable delay of another hour. Cheers for our dear England’s glory and safeguard—its Navy!” Within a few minutes the streets and houses were flooded

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with fresh editions of the local Liberal papers, in which the gift was announced and the cost of the battleship set down. People opened their eyes when they read that its cost would be over a million, and that every shilling was to come out of Mr Moses Mendoza's private purse. "A million!" they said to each other. "A million!" And this amazing gift was the act of the father of the bright young gentleman who was now seeking their suffrages. And this that was being done in the streets of Birchester, and the scenes that were being enacted therein were repeated in all the far-lying districts of the constituency where voters could be reached. Hundreds of men had not yet recorded their votes, and hundreds were wavering. The scale was weighed down heavily against Raphael Mendoza. Would it now be turned?

'Well, imagine the effect produced by this amazing gift, by this magnificent and unprecedented act of patriotism. It went home to all hearts with an electric thrill, and I afterwards heard some who had voted say that if they had not already given their votes to Peterson they would have given them to Mendoza.

"This is what the Liberals would do for the nation if they were in power," said the Liberal organs, "for the safety of hearth and home, for the glory of Britain, Queen of the Seas. We call upon all patriots to vote for Mr Raphael Mendoza, and to no longer submit to the tortoise-like movements of the present Government, whose finnick-ing processes are striking a deadly blow at the national honour and the national safety. We do not want a Navy on paper, we want it on the seas. Mothers, prevail upon your sons, wives, prevail upon your husbands, sweethearts, prevail upon your lovers, to vote for the man who has only one wish in his heart—the glory of his country, the peace and well-doing of his fellow citizens." And much more to the same effect,

The Pride of Race

'You cannot realise the scenes that took place ; it needs that you should have been on the spot, as I was. Raphael Mendoza's appearance was the signal for the wildest enthusiasm. They took the horses from his carriage and dragged it along, singing patriotic songs. In every street he was called upon for a speech, and his felicitous references to the election in relation to the national defence, and his allusions to his father's patriotic gift, were in his happiest vein, and were received with uproarious applause.

"I was entirely unaware," he said, "of my father's intention to present the battleship to the nation. He does not consult me in his business affairs, nor have I any part in them, direct or indirect. In his desire that I should devote myself to public affairs he deems it best, as I do, that I shall be left free and untrammelled. Out of my affection for him as a son, and of my admiration for him as a man, I may say this of him—that, by his latest act, he has proved himself a true patriot and an Englishman to the backbone."

'By some kind of masterly arrangement a wonderful display of patriotic bunting was made in all the windows, and flags were sold all over Birchester by hundreds of hucksters. In one edition of a local Liberal paper the question was asked, "What has Lord Peterson to say to Mr Moses Mendoza's patriotic gift? Will he also present a battleship to the nation?" This provoked hilarious laughter, for although Lord Peterson is an exceedingly wealthy man, he is known to be a great niggard.

'From that hour the tide turned in favour of Raphael Mendoza. It turned with a rush. At four o'clock Lord Peterson's majority had dwindled from twelve hundred to nine hundred and fifty. These figures, of course, were not arbitrary, but were arrived at by careful watching at the various polling places. At five o'clock his majority was six hundred ; an hour later it was barely a hundred, and an

hour later the announcement was made that the Liberal candidate was in a majority of fourteen. When the polling finally closed, it was confidently stated that he had been returned by a majority of not less than a hundred.

'The excitement continued through the night ; it could scarcely have been greater had a proclamation been made of a great national victory in a momentous war. When I left Birchester this morning congratulations were pouring in upon Raphael Mendoza from all parts of the country.'

'It is a wonderful story,' said the Cabinet Minister, 'and you have told it well. It certainly appears as if Mr Raphael Mendoza has a future ; and as for his father—well, it is an old stone in a new setting with a vengeance ; and it applies to all parties in this little domestic and political drama. Here we are at Lady Julia's. I must congratulate her upon her husband's victory.'

Curran, R.A., nodded and smiled, and they entered the flower-bedecked mansion.

CHAPTER X

BACK TO MASKS AND FACES

ENGAGEMENTS at other 'At Homes' and in the Row had taken most of Lady Julia's company away. There were not more than a dozen ladies present when Mr Curran and the Cabinet Minister entered. Three of the ladies were sitting together near their young hostess, whose scornful demeanour had undergone no change. But indifferent and apparently unobservant as she was, the hateful voices and presence of her visitors raised a tempest within her breast.

The names of the three ladies who were most obnoxious to her were Mrs Vayne, Madame Blitz, and Lady Martindale.

Mrs Vayne was one of the most familiar figures in certain sections of London Society, a marked personality in the world of fashion. She was a widow, and, it was whispered, lived upon her wits. That she wrote for the sixpenny weekly journals was well known, and it was also well known that she wielded a trenchant pen, more often than not dipped in acid. Even when she gave praise there was in it a bitter flavour. For this reason she was feared and courted. By Lady Julia she was simply despised.

Mrs Vayne was aware of this, but she did not openly resent it. She had made it her cue to quarrel with no lady whom she visited, and sometimes secretly lampooned. If in her personal intercourse she flung a poisoned arrow it was done with a smiling face.

To the high-class journals for which she wrote—journals which found a place upon every drawing-room table—she was invaluable, for no tittle-tattle in the shape of gossip or scandal escaped her, and she was generally first in the field. She was always to be seen at Ascot, Sandown and Goodwood, and she was not above taking a tip from a jockey. Doncaster and Epsom did not know her so well; they were too rowdy.

In the theatres she was never absent on an important first night, and if there was a reception at the back of the stage on the fall of the curtain, be sure that smooth-tongued, thin-lipped, steel-eyed Mrs Wayne was there, hob-nobbing with actor and actress. It was an established axiom that Mrs Wayne must be kept on the right side.

Madame Blitz was a mystery, and respecting her private history was not communicative. Some said that she had been a dancer in St Petersburg; others that she had been a fashionable dressmaker—according to one account in Vienna, according to another in New York—under an *alias* and had retired with a fortune; others that she was still carrying on business in Regent Street. She spoke with a slight French accent, and dressed daringly. In her descriptions of another lady's costume her technique was perfect.

Lady Martindale was fat, fair and forty, with a fatuous passion for pugs. She had one with her on the present occasion, and her attention seemed to be entirely absorbed in the hideous creature. It was a small pug with flattened features and bulging eyeballs, and was evidently ill at ease. No wonder. The creature was costumed. On its body an absurd coat, with a tiny lace handkerchief sticking out of its breast pocket, an absurd tie and stand-up collar round its neck, a still more absurd hat fastened on its unhappy head. It wriggled and fidgeted incessantly; and while it thus protested against its fate, Lady Martindale gazed at it with large, limpid, watery eyes.

'You have never seen Cupid, Mrs Vayne,' she said to that lady.

'Cupid!' exclaimed Mrs Vayne.

'My sweet pet here,' exclaimed Lady Martindale. 'Be quiet, Cupid! I am afraid he has had a bad night.' This with a tender caress and a stricter arrangement of the tie and lace handkerchief, which Cupid growlingly resented.

'Does it bite?' asked Mrs Vayne, making a mental note with a view to a paragraph.

'Bite! He hasn't an atom of vice in him. Have you, my pet?'

'But why call the creature Cupid?'

'It is so appropriate to the darling.'

'Perfectly ridiculous,' observed Mrs Vayne.

'Oh, Mrs Vayne!' murmured Lady Martindale, moved to tears.

'It is easy to see what is the matter with the animal,' remarked the callous critic.

'Animal!' exclaimed Lady Martindale, bridling up.

'It *is* an animal, isn't it?'

'How unsympathetic! How can you be so cruel?'

'Rubbish!' snapped Mrs Vayne.

Lady Martindale turned for consolation to Madame Blitz. 'Dear Madame Blitz, *you* can sympathise with me—you have a dear one at home—does darling Cupid look quite himself?'

'A little pale, perhaps,' said Madame Blitz, regarding the pug with a semi-professional air.

'Ah, you remark it,' said Lady Martindale, with mournful eagerness. 'You can have no conception how the poor dear suffers. He is a martyr to indigestion—it is heart-breaking. I gave him a pill last night in a piece of cake. He rejected it. Do you like his costume? You are a judge of these matters.'

'It is very cunning,' replied Madame Blitz.

'Yes, is it not? I was sure it would attract. As we came here everybody stared at us.'

'It would have been extraordinary if they had not,' said Mrs Vayne.

With a desire to soothe both ladies Madame Blitz said, 'The costume is very novel. Who made it?'

'Bombinet, Rue Royale, Paris.'

'Ah, Bombinet,' remarked Madame Blitz, with intelligence. 'It is a well-known name.'

'World renowned. I took Cupid to Paris expressly. It was a dreadful crossing—the sweet pet's sufferings were excruciating—I feared he would have expired in my arms—the stewardess could do nothing. It was an inexpressible comfort when we were safely landed. Monsieur Bombinet is a marvellous man. We discussed the costume for hours. None but a born genius could have fitted Cupid so strikingly. I cannot be grateful enough to him.'

Mrs Vayne gave utterance to a short, snappy laugh, and said abruptly, 'In Heaven's name, who is Bombinet?'

'Is it possible you don't know?' said Lady Martindale, her elevated eyebrows accentuating her astonishment. 'My dear Madame Blitz, she asks who is Bombinet!'

'Well, well,' said Mrs Vayne, impatiently, 'when all's said and done, who is the man?'

'Tell her, Madame Blitz.'

'Monsieur Bombinet,' said the smiling Madame Blitz, 'is the celebrated Parisian dog's tailor.'

'A second Worth,' said Lady Martindale, with enthusiasm. 'He made me happy by informing me that he is going to open an establishment in Bond Street.'

'As a costumier for puppies?'

'Yes.'

'Ha! He'll find fools enough,' said Mrs Vayne, sententiously. 'When he comes here I'll interview him.'

A footman stood before the ladies with tea, and each of them took a cup.

'You sweet darling!' said Lady Martindale, lifting the pug on her lap, and spilling her tea. 'He wouldn't eat his pheasant for lunch to-day—he is so fastidious! If anything should happen to him! There are losses one never gets over.'

It was Madame Blitz's consistent endeavour in her conduct of life to be all things to all women, and to agree with everyone, so she said, rather vaguely, 'We suffer through our affections.'

'How true, how true!' sighed Lady Martindale, caressing Cupid, whose growls and snaps showed how deep was its resentment at this display of affection.

Mrs Wayne had made several attempts to engage Lady Julia in conversation, and had only succeeded in drawing from her hostess a slight and somewhat contemptuous recognition of her presence. Between these ladies no friendly intimacy of any kind existed. Lady Julia regarded Mrs Wayne's visits as an intrusion, and had never returned them, although she was in the regular receipt of cards intimating that Mrs Wayne 'received' four times a month during the season.

This impolite and significant conduct had no outward effect upon Mrs Wayne; it was indeed an inducement to that lady never to neglect an opportunity of calling upon Lady Julia. The encouragement she received from Mr Moses Mendoza was in her opinion a sufficient warranty for her visits. She was on friendly terms with the millionaire, and often called upon him in the City for the purpose of 'screwing out of him,' as she termed it, any little bit of gossip of the Stock Exchange likely to be of use in her contributions to the weekly society papers, in the columns of which finance was an important item. She seldom visited him without introducing Lady Julia's name, and always in a manner that gratified him.

'I am thinking of calling upon your charming daughter-in-law to-morrow,' she would say.

'Do, do,' he would reply. 'She will be glad to see you, glad to see you. Lovely woman, ain't she?'

'The most beautiful woman in England,' she would answer. "And a lucky woman, too, to have *you* for a father-in-law.'

Whereupon he would chuckle and rub his hands, and perhaps give a hint as to an expected rise or fall in a certain stock, of which she did not fail to take advantage, using him to her profit and laughing at him behind his back. In none of her visits to Lady Julia did Mrs Vayne omit to state that she had seen 'dear Mr Moses Mendoza' yesterday or the day before, and that he had urged her to make the call.

Thus the game of cross-purposes went on, with veiled malice on the one side, and scarcely veiled contempt on the other.

On the present occasion Lady Julia's attitude had been more contemptuous than usual, and Mrs Vayne was determined to draw her out and drive home a poisoned sting or two. During a lull in the general buzz of conversation she said in a loud and honeyed voice,—

'My dear Lady Julia, where do you get your tea from? It is delicious.'

All eyes being turned upon the young hostess she was compelled to reply.

'I do not get it,' she said languidly.

'Nobody supposes,' said Mrs Vayne, hands spread in a bland appeal to the company generally, 'that you go to a shop and buy it yourself, dear Lady Julia. Somebody gets it for you. Do let us into the secret.'

'Mr Mendoza gets it for me.'

'Your husband?' smilingly asked Mrs Vayne.

'No,' replied Lady Julia, with a curl of the lip.

'Ah,' said Madame Blitz, 'that delightful old—gentleman, Mr Moses Mendoza.'

There was a world of meaning in the momentary hesitation between the words 'old' and 'gentleman,' and Mrs Vayne's smile broadened as she said,—

'It comes, of course, from China.'

'I believe not,' said Lady Julia.

'Where from, then? My dear Lady Julia, don't keep us in suspense. We are positively dying to know.'

'It comes from Russia.'

Her point thus carried, Mrs Vayne carried it further.

'How kind of him to take so much trouble as to buy your tea for you! But I always have said he is the kindest dear! It is, I suppose, a special brand.'

'The Emperor's brand.'

Another mute appeal to the company from Mrs Vayne, with her hands outspread, as who should say, 'Did you ever hear anything more interesting than this?' Aloud she said, 'Pray tell us, dear Lady Julia, if we can obtain it in London. I will drive to the shop at once.'

'As you appear to be so anxious about a cup of tea,' said Lady Julia, 'I have heard my husband's father say that it is impossible to obtain it in England—that he has to smuggle it over and to pay enormous bribes—and that it costs several pounds an ounce.'

General movement of astonished admiration from the assembled company, and a request from several ladies for another cup.

'Dear me!' said Mrs Vayne, toying with her *pince-nez*. 'Se-ver-al pounds an ounce!'

'Ah, these millionaires!' murmured Madame Blitz. 'They rule the world.'

Stung by these remarks Lady Julia for a moment lost her self-possession. 'So like Mr Moses Mendoza, is it not?' she said.

‘In what respect, dear Lady Julia?’ asked Mrs Vayne.

Very scornful indeed was the tone in which Lady Julia replied, ‘When he gives you anything, to tell you how much it costs.’

‘How candid! How charming?’ exclaimed Mrs Vayne, with inward satisfaction. ‘What a perfect judge of character! My dear Lady Julia, with such powers of observation as you possess you ought to write a novel. I promise you at least one flattering review. It is rather serious, though, this smuggling of tea from Russia. It was tea that caused the American War of Independence, and lost us that country. Let us hope that Mr Moses Mendoza will not bring about a war between Russia and England. Here is Mr Curran, who painted that wonderful portrait of you in the Academy, and the no less wonderful portrait of your father-in-law. How do you do, Mr Curran? And Mr Percival, too. My dear Mr Percival, is it quite true that Mr Raphael Mendoza has been returned for Birchester?’

‘There is little doubt of it,’ replied the Cabinet Minister.

‘Do you hear that, Lady Julia?’ said Mrs Vayne. ‘I congratulate you. It is a great victory. Not that I take any special interest in politics; social subjects are more my forte; but one can’t help feeling glad at a friend’s success in anything. You will excuse me, Mr Percival, if I say bravo! bravo!’ She applauded gracefully with the tips of her fingers. ‘You are too late, Captain Verjuice.’ To a gentleman who had followed Mr Curran and the Cabinet Minister into the room. ‘We have heard the glorious news.’

‘The glorious news!’ exclaimed Captain Verjuice, vacantly. ‘What news? How d’ye do, Lady Julia? Warm day, isn’t it?’

Lady Julia inclined her head icily, and, scarcely noticing Mr Curran, turned to the Cabinet Minister, and received his congratulations with a languid and indifferent air.

In a niche, some half-dozen feet from where she sat, was an admirable copy of the Faun of Praxiteles, the marble image of a young man, holding in its hand a broken instrument of sylvan music. But for its animal ears it might have been modelled from a matchless human form, so charming and symmetrical were its limbs and features. There was on its face a curious suggestion of resemblance to the face of Lady Julia, only that there was a smile on its mouth and none on the face of the lady. But the suggestion was there.

The eye of the artist caught it instantly, and, ignoring Lady Julia's chilling reception of him, he made mention of it.

'It is not the first compliment you have paid me,' she said. She was thinking of the two portraits he had painted, hanging side by side on the Academy walls.

'If I said the face was very beautiful,' he pleaded, 'would you consider it one?'

'Hardly. It is the statue of an animal.'

'Into which the sculptor has conveyed the highest ideal of beauty. In the portrayal of human grace and sweetness Praxiteles was unapproachable.'

She toyed with her fan, and did not reply. So entirely was she governed by a sentiment of rebellion against society, against the world, against herself, and so angry was she with the artist for the indignity which, in her belief, he had thrust upon her, that she declined to converse with him; and he, in obedience to her silent wish, presently took his departure in the company of his friend.

CHAPTER XI

ENTER VIVIAN ST MAUR

MEANWHILE Captain Verjuice was addressing himself to Mrs Vayne.

'News !' he repeated. 'What news?'

'Why, Mr Raphael Mendoza's return for Birchester, to be sure.'

'Oh, ah !' he said, glancing round. 'Mr Moses Mendoza not here?' The captain was a gentleman of thirty, with a vacuous countenance, which his use of a monocle did not improve. He had a little simpering laugh, and his light hair was parted in the middle.

'Now, what do you want with Mr Moses Mendoza?' asked Mrs Vayne, patting his sleeve confidentially.

'Want to thank him. Bought some shares by his advice; held on to them by his advice; got rid of them by his advice. Just received a cheque from my broker, a cool three hundred. Doosid useful. Ha, ha ! Good sort, old Moses. Never lets a fellow in.'

'Everybody doesn't say that,' observed Mrs Vayne.

'Ought to, then. Wish he was *my* father-in-law. Ha, ha ! I say, Mrs Vayne, what's the matter with Lady Julia ? She freezes a fellow—positively freezes a fellow. What's put her out?'

'Bend your head. You shouldn't talk of him.'

'Old Moses?'

'Yes.'

'But why not? She's his daughter-in-law. Back him for all I'm worth. Ha, ha!' His silly laugh matched his weak face. 'Everybody says he's a wonderful man. That's what *I* say. Then why take offence? Mustn't a fellow speak well of him?'

'As a money man?'

'It's the only way a fellow *can* speak of him. He's all money—from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. A jolly good job, too, for some of us.'

'Perhaps you are right,' said Mrs Vayne. 'When all's said and done, money is the great lever.'

'Rather! What are we without it? Nothing. Where are we without it? Nowhere. Ha, ha!'

'How graphically expressed! I shall use it in one of my paragraphs. And the man who makes the money is the man to believe in.'

'What else can a fellow do? I believe in old Moses—always shall. Nothing like having faith in a man—go the whole hog.'

'Faith can move mountains,' said Mrs Vayne, with a wise nod.

'Don't know about that. Money can. I'll back old Moses against the whole Stock Exchange. He can give them fifty out of a hundred, and wipe the lot of them off the slate. Cheers!'

'Quite so,' said Mrs Vayne, in her most amiable tone. 'Cheers!'

'But, Captain Verjuice,' said Madame Blitz, 'is it not true that people laugh at him?'

'Some do—on the wrong side of their mouth. They may do what they like, but I take off my hat to him. He's a regular trump. Shall ask him for another tip. Ha, ha!'

'My sweet pet looks a little better, does he not?' said Lady Martindale to Madame Blitz.

'Eh?' cried Captain Verjuice, thinking she had appealed

to him, and surveying Cupid through his monocle. 'Rum little beggar. Is he sick?'

'I was not addressing you, Captain Verjuice,' said Lady Martindale.

'Beg pardon, beg pardon. My mistake.'

'Complexion might be a little clearer,' said Madame Blitz.

'Eh? My complexion!' Captain Verjuice blundered out. 'Oh, beg pardon. My mistake again. Always putting my foot in it.'

The Cabinet Minister and Mr Curran at that moment going to the door, encountered Vivian St Maur and exchanged greetings with him.

His entrance was the signal for a marked change in Lady Julia. Her face flushed with pleasure, she half rose from her seat, and eagerly held out her hand.

'Vivian!'

'Julia!'

'Humph!' muttered Mrs Vayne, with a gleam in her eyes.

When she was in this mood she had a habit of nearly closing them, leaving only a thin line visible, which shone like polished steel. It meant that mischief was in the air, and that she was on the trail.

Unaware of, or indifferent to, this malicious observation of their attitude towards each other, Julia drew her cousin a little apart from the company, in order that they might converse with greater freedom.

'The usual crowd,' said Vivian St Maur, with a short, sneering laugh. 'A pretty lot of sycophants!'

'Oh, how they weary me! If they had any sense of self-respect, they would not show themselves here. I hate them, hate them!'

'Tell them so,' he said shortly.

'I do, as plainly as one woman can to another, and they

smile in my face, and twist my words. However they may feel, they do not show it, but smile, and smile, and smile, hating me in their hearts as much as I hate them.'

'Ah,' he said, and now there was an under-look in his eyes, as though he were curious to learn what effect his next words would have upon her, 'it does not do in this world to have feelings.' She was silent; he had missed his mark. 'I would shut the door in their faces,' he added.

'Impossible; there are conventions—'

'Oh, yes, conventions,' he said impatiently, 'that drain the happiness out of our lives. I know what I would do with conventions.'

'You are a man, I am a woman. You are free to come and go where you please, to talk to whom you please, to walk with whom you please. You could even do what would be moral death to me, and the world would not blame you overmuch.' He started, in doubt for a moment whether these were words wildly spoken, or spoken with direct meaning; her following words dispelled any fear he might have had. 'So you see I am bound by conventional laws. My husband wishes me to receive; his father and mine say I must receive. What am I, then? A slave—a slave!'

'You need not be,' he said softly. 'I have told you so a hundred times. As for these women—'

She interrupted him almost gaily. 'Don't let us talk about them. Now that *you* are here—'

'Well?' he asked, as she paused.

'I can ignore their presence, I can forget them.' He held out some flowers he had brought with him. 'For me? My favourite flowers!' She held them to her face a while. 'You think of me a great deal, Vivian.'

'I think of you always,' he said passionately. 'Your image never leaves my mind—or my heart! What reward do I receive?'

‘Hush!’ Recalled to herself, she cast an apprehensive glance around. ‘That odious woman, Mrs Vayne, is watching us. Sit here, and tell me the news. I am so glad you have come!’

She stepped back into a recess which lay in the shadow of the room, and Vivian St Maur took a seat by her side.

CHAPTER XII

WHY LADY JULIA MARRIED

‘AND they don’t conceal it!’ said Mrs Vayne, partly to herself, partly to Madame Blitz. ‘Our sweet young friend does not possess common prudence.’

‘It is—French,’ observed Madame Blitz, with whom it was a favourite trick to pause a moment between the utterance of two words, conveying thereby a meaning which the words themselves, without the significant pause, would scarcely have conveyed. ‘Was there not a rumour once of an engagement between them?’

‘Society gossip,’ replied Mrs Vayne, ‘which is not invariably based upon actual fact.’ This with a contradictory smile. Both these ladies knew how to play effectually with innuendo.

‘You should not say so,’ said Madame Blitz. ‘We believe everything *you* write.’

‘Very weak of you. I am only a poor scribbler, and all’s fish that comes to my net. There was such a rumour; it got into the papers.’

‘And was not disputed,’

‘And was not disputed,’ affirmed Mrs Vayne. ‘Neither the Earl of Lynwood nor Lady Julia was likely to write to the papers concerning any rumour affecting themselves—too low, my dear, too plebeian—and it is about the last thing Vivian St Maur would do to contradict a rumour which associated his name with the daughter of a peer. That

kind of thing is flattering to one's vanity, you know, and in Vivian St Maur's cranium the organ is largely developed. He and Lady Julia are cousins, and whatever matrimonial hopes he may have had in her direction her marriage with young Mr Mendoza put an end to them.'

'It was strange, was it not?' asked Madame Blitz, with an amused shrug of her shoulders, 'that a member of your English aristocracy and of the Church of England should marry a Jew?'

'Oh, that sort of thing is common enough now; it is becoming more common every day. There are not many wealthy Jews in England who would refuse such an alliance for one of their daughters. The Jews, who have the reputation of being an exclusive race, are broadening out and becoming assimilative. Lady Julia had illustrious examples before her.'

'Yes, yes. Still—' Madame Blitz shook her head doubtfully.

'Now, don't be uncharitable,' said Mrs Vayne, with reproving forefinger. 'I never am. Some of these mixed marriages turn out happily.'

'This one?'

'Humph!'

'How about the children? What is their religion?'

'In some cases left to choose for themselves, in other cases a matter of arrangement beforehand; in other cases boys one thing, girls another.'

'Ah, well, marriage is always a lottery.'

'It is a chain,' said Mrs Vayne, in a severe tone, 'to some couples enduring, to others a chain that eats into the flesh.'

'My dear Mrs Vayne, you are behind the scenes everywhere. Tell me precisely why Lady Julia married Mr Raphael Mendoza?'

Mrs Vayne laughed. 'What do we women generally marry for?'

'Love?' said Madame Blitz, pensively; she was more inclined than her companion to relapse into the sentimental vein.

'I believe it has happened,' replied Mrs Vayne, drily. 'There is another and more popular inducement.'

'Money.'

'Exactly. Money. I do not refer to the lower classes, who are frequently to be observed in the public streets with their arms round each other's necks. I am speaking of our set. It is only simpletons who marry for love. Sensible people have other views; they marry for money, for an establishment.'

'Why, yes, it is so necessary—an irresistible temptation.'

'Lady Julia may be devoid of tact,' said Mrs Vayne; 'she may violate the obligations of ordinary politeness, but it would be going a little too far to call her a simpleton.'

'She is one of the sensible ones.'

'To a certain extent. It cannot be denied that she belongs to one of our oldest families; I would be the last person to deny her claim to that distinction. The history of the Lynwoods is familiar enough. Paupers, my dear, paupers; two mutton chops between three people served up on a silver dish. They were once very wealthy, and held great estates in the country; they date back I don't know how many centuries. A long succession of spend-thrift earls played ducks and drakes with their property, which went bit by bit. There are all sorts of stories about them, romantic, disreputable, heroic, the reverse, most of them tinged with the peculiar attractive colour which attaches to all historic names. Their chief possession is the famous Lynwood Forest, mortgaged up to the hilt. Of course they fell into the hands of the money-lenders, who sucked them dry. The present earl was hopelessly bankrupt, and a certain wily person bought up all his obligations, bills, mortgages, and what-not, became the

old lord's only creditor, and held him in the hollow of his hand.'

'I see. Young Mr Mendoza.'

'No, old Mr Mendoza, who had the presumption to make up his mind that his son Raphael should marry into the cream of the English aristocracy. There are no bounds to the presumption of these men.'

'That is why Moses bought up all the earl's debts.'

'No doubt of it. I have an idea that young Mendoza was really in love with Lady Julia. In appearance he is very different from his father; his manners are very gentlemanly, and he is considered good-looking. I do not wish to do him an injustice—by no means. If you were to ask me whether he and his father were in a conspiracy to bring the earl to his knees, I should certainly be inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt; and I should also say that he would not have had the temerity to address Lady Julia with a view to matrimony had he not been encouraged by the earl.'

'The last person in the world one would imagine who would encourage such an alliance.'

'Ah, my dear, when needs must—'

'Old Moses Mendoza drives.'

'Very clever, very clever indeed. You might set up for a wit. The details of the arrangement between the parties were not given to the world—it would never do to reveal these delicate matters—but the upshot was that public announcement was made that a marriage had been arranged between Lady Julia and Mr Raphael Mendoza, son of the eminent financier—that after a brief courtship the marriage actually took place—and that the earl was set upon his legs again. It must have been a great comfort to him to have a balance at the bank to his credit. The settlements, which were on the most liberal scale, made Lady Julia a rich woman, and her fortune is absolutely her own. No one,

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not even her husband, has any control over it. That is the whole story in a nutshell. But it sometimes happens,' she added, 'that in such a story there are developments.'

'Ah, yes, developments,' assented Madame Blitz.

A sound of laughter from the recess reached their ears. The two ladies looked at each other significantly.

'They are very light-hearted,' observed Madame Blitz.

'Very.'

'There was quite a wonderful change in her when he entered. The way she started up—there was quite a blush on her face—if they had been alone they might have—kissed.'

'My dear, my dear!' said Mrs Vayne, in gay protest. 'But, after all, they are cousins, and that kind of thing between cousins is not unusual.'

'What does her husband say to it?'

'He is the most unsuspicious of men. He trusts her implicitly. They are laughing again.'

'Love is blind,' said Madame Blitz.

'In this instance stone-blind,' rejoined Mrs Vayne, 'and stone-deaf as well.'

'And women are—women.'

'Not all of them in the sense you imply. If I were in Lady Julia's place I should play my cards differently. I can find no excuse for her. She sets at defiance the laws of common decency and politeness. And if I were in her husband's place, I would very soon bring her to book.'

'He may not be so blind as you suppose,' said Madame Blitz, contemplatively. 'It is not at all impossible that he knows of her goings-on and winks at them. Some men are made that way. Is Vivian St Maur rich?'

'Rich!' exclaimed Mrs Vayne. 'The scapegrace never had a penny he could call his own. He is over head and heels in debt—owes everybody. I have heard nice stories about him.'

‘Gambles?’

‘Horses, cards, Stock Exchange, everything. Burns the candle at both ends and lights it in the middle. A type, my dear, of the useless and the vicious.’ Her lynx eyes noted the entrance of another caller. ‘Now, I wonder,’ she said, ‘what brings Sir Philip Bramble here!’

CHAPTER XIII

CALL A SPADE A SPADE

A MIDDLE-AGED gentleman, short and stout, abrupt in speech and manner, advanced towards the gossipers.

'Talking of me,' he asserted. 'Don't deny it.'

'Don't mean to,' replied Mrs Vayne. 'I was wondering what brings you here. You're not a lady's man.'

'Thank God, no! Too much good sense to waste my time with a parcel of silly women. What do they do when they meet? Clack, clack, clack, chatter, chatter, chatter, like a parcel of magpies.'

'Thank you, Sir Philip.'

'Welcome. You know me. Frankness is one of my failings. If I have any.'

'You have another.'

'Name it.'

'Rudeness.'

'That's what you call plain speaking, is it? You women can't bear to hear the truth.'

'Oh yes, we can, and speak it much oftener than you give us credit for.'

'Glad to hear it. Not incumbent upon me to believe it. Want to know what brings me here? What brings every one here, all the Jacks and all the Jills? The worship of Mammon.'

'Oh, fie, Sir Philip!' said Madame Blitz.

'Fie be—boshed! You take your pills sugar-coated. I

don't. I repeat, the worship of Mammon. I am grovelling at his feet. I want shares in old Mendoza's new company—'

'His new company!' interrupted Mrs Vayne, eagerly. 'What is it?'

'Tell us, dear Sir Philip,' said Madame Blitz.

'Ah, ah! Fa, fe, fi, fo, fum—you smell blood. What does it matter what it is? A bootlace, a frill, a feather, a frying-pan—it is all the same, so long as there's a capital of ten millions and Moses Mendoza's name at the head of the prospectus.'

'You are very amusing.'

'Never more serious in my life. I want an option of five thousand shares. Up goes the premium. I don't hold—too wide awake—know the tricks—I sell, and take my profit.'

'Come, that's candid,' said Mrs Vayne.

'Call a spade a spade. Do the same.'

'I do.'

'You don't. Impossible. You're a woman. Why don't you confess that you come here for the same thing? Look at that idiot, Verjuice. What brings him here? He sits at Mammon's feet. So do you.'

'I should have no objection to a few shares which I could sell at a premium,' admitted Mrs Vayne, with good humour.

'Human nature. Look at the case—as it stands. Here we are, a mixed lot of ladies and gentlemen—call ourselves so—by way of compliment—no false pride in me—each of us holding a blacking brush—'

'A blacking brush! In Heaven's name, what for?'

'To black the boots of old Moses Mendoza—that low-bred, vulgar Money-bag—whose proper place is the kerbstone in Cheapside—selling penny toys—or shuffling along, calling, "Clo'! Old Clo'!"'

'Hush, you naughty man! If it should come to his ears!' expostulated Madame Blitz.

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'He'd only grin. He has the hide of a rhinoceros.'

'You sweet pet!' From Lady Martindale, who, absorbed in Cupid, had paid no heed to the conversation, and now rose to go.

Sir Philip Bramble stared at the dog, and exclaimed, 'By Heavens! Is this what the world's coming to?'

'Have you no fellow feeling, Sir Philip?' said Lady Martindale, reproachfully.

'Fellow feeling, madam!' he cried. 'Fellow fiddlesticks!'

'My sweet—my precious!' murmured Lady Martindale, hastily picking up the pug. 'Where's Lady Julia? Never mind. I will not stay here to be insulted.'

She made so hasty a departure that she stumbled against another arrival, in the person of a gentleman, who gazed at her with twinkling eyes. Sir Philip Bramble seized him by the arm.

'Chilcott, you look warm.'

'Warm's not the word,' said Lord Chilcott, wiping his forehead. 'I've just witnessed a scene that would set an icicle on the boil.'

'Where?'

'Stock Exchange.'

'Anything stirring there?' inquired Mrs Vayne, always on the lookout for 'copy.'

'Stirring! Bless my soul, there's been an hour of such excitement—this will interest you, Lady Julia.' As the young hostess, with Vivian St Maur's flowers in her hand, advanced a step or two, her cousin by her side.

'Indeed!' she said graciously.

'Your father-in-law— Eh? I beg pardon.'

For Lady Julia, at this reference to Moses Mendoza, suddenly turned her back upon him.

'Just as she served me,' said Captain Verjuice, in a low tone, 'when I mentioned Mr Moses Mendoza's name. It is taboo in this house, it seems.'

'But go on—go on,' said Sir Philip Bramble to Lord Chilcott.

'All right. This is settling day, you know. For the last fortnight a lot of fellows have been bearing his stock, and he has been secretly buying every share that was offered, and now, being called upon for delivery, they had to buy back at his price. They've been over-selling, and they find themselves trapped. You never saw men in such a frantic state. And there was Moses Mendoza chuckling and laughing, and every minute that passed as good as ten thousand pounds in his pocket. They say he has made half a million.'

'Half a million! Oh, oh, oh!' exclaimed Sir Philip Bramble, holding up his hands.

'Sets one's blood all of a tingle,' was Mrs Vayne's comment.

'What a man! What a man!' said Captain Verjuice.

'And he hasn't an h to his name,' said Sir Philip Bramble.

This account of Moses Mendoza's doings on the Stock Exchange, and the visitors' comments, were not lost upon Lady Julia, who, in her agitation, was unconsciously picking a flower to pieces. Vivian St Maur laid his hand upon her arm, and there was a biting sting in his softly-uttered words.

'What a father-in-law! All the grand deeds of an ancient and honoured house smirched and degraded by the tricks of the Money-god, who speaks of you as his daughter!'

'Is it generous to add to my sufferings?' Lady Julia answered. 'I am beginning to think I have not a friend in the world.'

'You have one who will never desert you,' St Maur replied, 'who will stand by you to the last if you will but give him an encouraging word. Listen to the mongrel crew.

They haven't the decency to wait till they are turned into the streets.'

'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed Sir Philip Bramble, making a motion with his hand, as if he were turning the handle of an organ. 'The whole world dancing to the tune the old Jew plays.'

'I want some shares in his new company,' said Mrs Vayne.

'So do I,' said Captain Verjuice.

'What a scramble there'll be for them!' said Madame Blitz.

'Dilly, dilly, dilly, come and be killed,' laughed Lord Chilcott.

'I have a good mind to run into the City and pick up old Moses,' said Sir Philip Bramble. 'Nothing like being first in the field.'

'I'll come with you,' said Captain Verjuice.

'And I,' said Lord Chilcott.

'We musn't be left out,' said Mrs Vayne to Madame Blitz.

Sir Philip glared at the ladies. 'It is indecent for women to mix themselves up in these matters!' he exclaimed.

'Indecent!' protested Madame Blitz. 'Well, now, that's comic.'

'Sir Philip doesn't seem to recognise that this is the woman's age,' remarked Mrs Vayne, with affable nods. Sir Philip made a gesture of disgust. 'You may sneer as much as you like,' she continued; 'it is our innings now, and we intend to make the most of it. You can't deny we're scoring fast. Before long we'll have a Stock Exchange of our own. No men admitted. What do you say to that, Sir Philip?'

'Heaven help you!' was his reply.

'We'll help ourselves,' she said cheerfully. Then turning in the direction of Lady Julia, 'Pray excuse me, Lady Julia. Such a pleasant afternoon!'

'Charming!' from Madame Blitz.

'Most agreeable!' from Sir Philip Bramble.

'Delightful!' from Lord Chilcott.

'That's what *I* say,' from Captain Verjuice.

'If we don't catch your dear father-in-law,' said Mrs Vayne, 'we shall probably drop in again. Positively I don't think I ever saw you looking so well as you do to-day. I remarked to Madame Blitz that I never saw you look quite so sweet as you do now.'

And so, with falsely-effusive smiles and bows, they trooped out, Sir Philip Bramble first, the others following close upon his heels. Previous to their departure all the rest of the company had left. Lady Julia and Vivian St Maur were alone.

CHAPTER XIV

FALSE HEART, FALSE TONGUE

ALTHOUGH for two or three minutes silence reigned in the room there was no pause in the drama of life which was being played therein. Lady Julia, convulsively clasping and unclasping her fingers, paced this way and that, oblivious for the time of the man in the background, whose eyes were following her movements. It cannot be affirmed that she was wrestling with her torturing thoughts; rather, out of her inward rebellion, she was feeding them, and by so doing causing the dominant idea from which they flowed to assume proportions so monstrous and unnatural that had she contemplated it when she was in a calmer mood and her mind not distraught, she would have gazed in doubt and wonder upon her own creation.

There is no more unhappy fate than that of a loveless marriage, and to this she conceived she had doomed herself. Not loveless on her husband's part, but on hers. Devotion more sincere, trust more complete, woman never received from man than Lady Julia received from Raphael Mendoza; but, from some warp in her nature which she made no effort to correct, she misconstrued his simplest actions, his simplest words, bringing against him the circumstances of his birth, the class from which he sprung, the religion in which he was born, the wealth his father possessed, and the means by which that wealth had been accumulated. Of all this he was unaware, deeming it

natural perhaps that she should hold herself above him, and looking forward confidently to the time when she would sympathise with the aims by which his life was guided.

The awakening from this dream was to come, the vital problem that lay before them had yet to be solved. Meanwhile he pursued his way, earning the respect and esteem of men, and seeing in his path no obstacle to the gentler feelings towards his father, which time and a better comprehension would inspire in her.

It was her misfortune that she should turn for consolation to the false heart of the companion of her childhood, to one with whom no woman's honour was safe, to a counsellor who, for his own base purposes, encouraged her in her unreasoning rebellion, and fanned it into a flame so dangerous as to threaten to destroy the happiness which lay within her reach. To this baseness, as to the worthiness of the nobler man, her eyes had yet to be opened.

At length her feelings found vent in words.

'Oh, the degradation, the degradation!' she cried. 'The sight of those people, their sordid scheming, their conversation, the one subject that engrosses them! How low I have fallen, how low, how low!'

Vivian St Maur made a movement towards her.

'Julia!'

'Don't speak—don't speak!' she cried. 'Let me fight my battle alone!'

'Not while I live,' he said. 'However poor the comfort may be, it is surely worth knowing that you have one man by your side who will help you to fight the battle and win it.'

'And win it!' she echoed with a scornful gesture.

'And win it,' he repeated vehemently. 'Do you not believe I am your friend?'

'Yes, Vivian,' she replied in a tenderer tone, 'almost my

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only friend. I am not very old, but I feel as if I had lived a long, long life, from which all joy has departed.'

'You are wrong, Julia. I will prove it. Let us talk of the future.'

'No, not of the future,' she said, shuddering. 'We will talk of the past, of the pleasant years we spent together when we were children. Do you remember our rambles in Lynwood Forest, and the stories we read there of the legends which make it a thing apart from all the rest of the world? The trees in the dear old forest are enchanted. I used to think they lived as we live, and could feel as we feel. The fancies we wove around them! Often in my girlhood I saw the fairies dancing in the moonlight, and when the forest was wrapt in shadow I saw the Lynwood soldiers marching through to battle for the king. The Lynwoods never swerved from their allegiance to the king. They fought and died for him, and my heart was filled with pride as I read of their valiant deeds. There was a Lynwood three hundred years ago who stood with his back against the King's Oak, and kept twenty men from following in pursuit a full hour, the blood flowing from his wounds and soaking into the ground, where at last he fell and died the hero's death. I used to kiss the hallowed earth, and whisper messages to the spirit of the brave soldier. On dark nights I would stand at my bedroom window, listening to the waving of the branches and the rustling of the leaves, and saw in the distance the shadows of our men who were marching to death or victory. Voices came to me from the depths of the forest. "You are a Lynwood," they said. "Yes, I am a Lynwood," I whispered to myself, "and if I were a man my dearest wish would be to live as they lived, to do battle as they did, to die as they died." It made me sob to know I was a girl, but still I was a Lynwood, a Lynwood! That could not be taken from me. Ah, Vivian, it is a grand story, the

story of our race ; England's history contains no grander. Never till now had a Lynwood cause to hide his head in shame—never till now, never till now !'

Her head drooped, and in the utterance of these last words the passion and fervour died out of her voice.

'How often in those days did I tell you I loved you, Julia ?' he asked.

'We loved each other, Vivian,' she said, and then, timidly, as though some excuse were needed, 'We are cousins.'

'That doesn't count,' he said roughly. 'You knew I loved you.'

'Yes,' she said, still timidly, afraid to face and acknowledge what was in his mind.

'I have never ceased to love you. I have the right to say you belong to me.'

'You must not say it. When we were children it was different, but now !—'

'It was not only as a child that I told you I loved you. I have told it to you as a man. I love you, I love you !'

'Hush, hush !' she implored, and then, despairingly, 'We are on the rocks—I see the abyss ! How to escape—how to escape !'

'It is easy. There are many years of happiness before us if you will but be honest to yourself and to me. I love you—I love you !'

Vivian St Maur seized her hand and kissed it, and drew her to him. For a moment she yielded, but only for a moment. With a sudden cry she wrested herself away.

'No, no ! I must not, I dare not listen !'

'You must, you shall !'

'Not when you speak in that way, when you tempt me to forget myself,' said Lady Julia, firmly. 'Though I rebel against my lot, it is not for you to make it harder for me to bear.'

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'Have I nothing to bear?' he asked, in a querulous tone, and it was in his nature that he should be oblivious of the unmanliness of such an appeal. 'Do I deserve no consideration?'

Much as these two had in common—birth, breeding, close relationship, affectionate associations of childhood—each was, as it were, intrenched within a barrier through which none but purely selfish considerations could make their way. In this aspect she, mistaken and misguided as she might be, was at least sincere, but he could lay no just claim to ingenuousness or sincerity. Devoid of moral feeling, a schemer, a ne'er-do-well, a man who systematically lived upon others, and who, in his pursuit of gross pleasures, lost sight of those principles of honour to the possession of which he laid arrogant claim, he was a dangerous adviser to a rebellious woman who had faith in him, and who believed he could do no wrong. He traded upon the confidence placed in him, not only by him, but by others, tacitly holding his social rank as an excuse for conduct which would have brought despal upon one moving in a lower station than himself.

'It is the woman who plays with the man,' he continued sullenly, 'and who moans and cries. My feelings are not worthy of notice. You think only of the man who stepped between us, who robbed me of you.'

'Hardly that, Vivian,' she gently remonstrated. 'In our state of poverty it would have been madness to indulge in hopes that could never be realised.'

'I did indulge in them, nevertheless,' was his rejoinder; 'and perhaps it would have been better for you'—he looked angrily and contemptuously upon the evidences of wealth around them—'if you had not sold yourself for this gilded cage. There isn't a thing in your fine establishment that does not bear upon it the crest of that dignified and high-minded gentleman, Mr Moses Mendoza. You are quite

right when you speak of degradation.' In the glance she cast at him she seemed to be making a piteous appeal. The only effect it had upon him was to provoke a malicious smile. 'I heard a curious question asked about you, Julia. It was whether your marriage with Mr Raphael Mendoza made him a Christian, or you—a Jewess.'

'You are cruel,' she murmured.

'You have no heart,' he retorted.

'If that were true,' she said sadly, 'I should be the happier for it.' He seized her hand and would have kissed it, but she plucked it away. 'My father!' she whispered.

CHAPTER XV

THE EARL OF LYNWOOD DEFENDS HIMSELF

A STATELY gentleman of sixty-five, holding himself erect, with the old aristocratic manner upon him, every gesture made with dignity and courtesy. The Earl of Lynwood.

'All your company gone?' he said to Lady Julia, at the same moment recognising the familiar presence of Vivian St Maur by a genial nod. 'Has your husband returned?'

'No,' she replied. 'I had a telegram from him; he will be here shortly. He excuses himself by saying he could not leave Birchester before the poll was declared.'

She spoke with visible constraint, as though the subject were one upon which she would have preferred to be silent.

'It is declared,' said the earl, 'and is in all the latest editions. A majority of thirty-four. A great victory, a very great victory.'

'Gained upon his merits, sir?' asked Vivian St Maur, superciliously.

'I will not say that. No doubt it is true that Mr Moses Mendoza's wonderful gift to the nation—ha, hum!—had much to do with it.'

'All to do with it, sir,' said Vivian St Maur.

'Perhaps, perhaps. When your husband first informed me, Julia, that he had consented to stand for Birchester I pointed out to him and his father how hopeless were his chances. Raphael admitted it, but said the fight would do him no harm. Mr Moses Mendoza said the same thing to

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me privately, and hinted that he had—ha, hum!—something up his sleeve. Ha, ha, ha! Singular phrase, but significant. Something up his sleeve!’

‘From the *Slang Dictionary*,’ observed Vivian St Maur.

‘We should be accustomed to vulgarisms by this time,’ said Lady Julia, disdainfully.

‘Many of these familiar sayings,’ pleaded the earl, ‘have much force in them, and are very expressive. It did not occur to me to ask Mr Moses Mendoza what particular thing it was he had—ha, hum!—up his sleeve, but it turns out that it was this extraordinary gift of the battleship. It is, without doubt, the most wonderful move that was ever made in an English election. That it was sudden and unexpected made it all the more effective. None but a master mind could have conceived it, none but a man of the most liberal spirit could have made such a sacrifice. There is in it a certain reckless prodigality which commends admiration, and—ha, hum!—takes one’s breath away. All the more because it proceeds from a man who has risen from the lower classes, and who received his early training—’

‘In the gutters,’ said Vivian St Maur.

‘Not quite so low as that, Vivian. Be just.’

‘He is fortunate in finding a champion in the Earl of Lynwood.’

‘We speak of men as we find them. Rank is no justification for taking a distorted view of things.’

‘Why, sir, have you turned democrat?’

‘No, Vivian, no; but I cannot be blind to what is passing around me. Society is undergoing a change—we are living under new conditions.’

‘Unfortunately.’

‘It is too large a question to discuss just now. We must not be prejudiced against the lower classes. Many of our ablest leaders have sprung from the ranks. I regret that

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Raphael Mendoza does not share my political opinions ; it is a loss to our party and a possible embarrassment. With his oratorical gifts and clear brain, he may attain a commanding position in the country. He may become—'

'Chancellor of the Exchequer, Colonial Secretary, Prime Minister,' sneeringly intervened Vivian.

'Why not—why not?'

'Only, sir, that these offices are not generally bought and sold.'

'No, thank God ! They are won by talent and strength of character.'

'And honesty.'

'Yes, and honesty. We English have our political faults, but our statesmen are not corrupt. Raphael Mendoza may take his place among the highest. It is but a step from the lower to the Upper House, and—ha, hum !—all's well that ends well.'

'Can it be well,' cried Lady Julia, passionately, 'with a man like Mr Moses Mendoza haunting us like our shadow, thrusting his vulgar personality into every action of our lives?'

'Julia !' exclaimed the earl, in a tone of amazement.

'I must speak !' she rejoined. 'I must—I must—I must !'

At this outburst Vivian was making a movement towards her when Earl Lynwood, with a dignified gesture, waved him aside.

'Stand back, Vivian. This is between me and my daughter.' He turned to her. 'What do you wish to say, Julia?'

'We once had reason to be proud of our name—'

'Once? Once?' he exclaimed, with doubt in his face, as though something incredible had been uttered.

'It was an honoured name,' she proceeded.

'And ever will be. Who dare say otherwise?'

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'The world,' she replied, with bitter emphasis.

'The world!' he echoed. 'I fling the slander back in its teeth. There is no stain upon our shield.'

'There is. My marriage has dragged it into the mire!'

In agitation as profound as hers, the earl said, with a note of helpless despair in his voice, 'You say this to me now! You were not forced into the marriage.'

'Oh, I know too well,' she retorted, 'that force was not used. If it had been, I might have been spared the humiliation.'

'You forget yourself and me,' he said, with a pitiful endeavour to preserve his dignity. 'You forget the circumstances. When we first made the acquaintance of the Mendozas, our house was tottering, our credit exhausted. A spectre followed me day and night—black ruin stared me in the face—our heirlooms waiting to be seized—every acre of land, every cottage on the estates mortgaged to its uttermost value. Not another shilling could be raised; creditors clamouring for payment; servants insultingly demanding their wages—we scarcely dared show our faces. How often were you in tears and I in despair! Surely, surely you remember.'

'Oh, yes, I remember, I remember! And one man stood above us, holding out ruin in his hands.'

'You take a wrong view of the position, Julia. Instead of many creditors pressing upon us from all sides, we had practically but one, who treated me with respect, who used no threats, who showed the greatest indulgence. I felt no scruple in availing myself of the further assistance he generously offered, by which I was enabled to discharge several small—ha, hum!—domestic obligations.'

'For what purpose did he do this?' she demanded. 'Did you ask yourself that question? He said, "You have a daughter." Oh, shame, shame!'

'There is no shame,' he protested, and now there was a

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certain tremulousness in his speech. 'You—you distress me deeply. Mr Mendoza used no such words, and whatever he did he was within his rights—our future was in his hands—few men would have spared us, few would have acted so considerately. We cannot have everything we wish for. I was born into an inheritance of debt and bankruptcy; I came into the title a beggar, and remained a beggar until the man you revile appeared. Did you ever think what my life had been up to that time?'

'Did I not share it?'

'We suffered together, but the bitterer suffering was mine, and I concealed much from you; and you were young, I was old. After a bitter struggle of sixty years, which almost broke my heart—' He paused to recover himself, and the agitation of the father who had never spoken a harsh word to her softened her towards him.

'Father!' she murmured, but in his distress her gentler mood was lost upon him.

'After the long and bitter struggle,' he continued, 'the opportunity presented itself of releasing myself from the chains which bore me down.' He looked around with a helpless air. 'What was I to do—what was I to do?'

'It is not you I am reproaching,' she said. 'Had not the man made conditions—'

He interrupted her quickly. 'He made none. I cannot recall the first step which led to the friendly intimacy between us, but I know that I was impressed by his forbearance and generosity, and was still more favourably impressed by the manners of his son when they came to our house upon my invitation. You made no objection then.'

'They were our guests—and the father was your creditor.'

'That should not be set against him. The intimacy grew, and in some way not exactly clear to me now, the subject of an engagement between his son and my daughter

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was introduced. He spoke frankly—he used no threats. I put it before you—it was for you to decide—and now, now, you throw upon me the burden and the reproach—’

‘No, no, father. Forgive me! What I did was done with my eyes open. I was a coward. There was no alternative but poverty, and I had not the courage to face it.’

The Earl of Lynwood rallied and straightened himself.

‘All that is at an end. You are rich, mistress of your own fortune—’

‘Yes, they were liberal. Every temptation was held out to me.’

‘Not by your husband. I will not have you say that of him, Julia.’

‘No, he spoke to me only of his love, and I—I listened. It made you happy, father?’

‘Yes, my child,’ he said, fondling her hand, ‘but I want to see you happy.’

‘I will try to be, I will try.’

‘You will succeed. It should be a satisfaction to you that your husband has no part in his father’s business affairs. He settled a great estate upon Raphael, in order that he might—ha, hum!—worthily uphold his alliance with our family. Really, Julia, your position is an enviable one. You have everything that money can buy.’

‘There are things, father, that money cannot buy.’

‘Perhaps, perhaps. Ancestry, noble deeds of the past, historic associations, visible and spiritual heirlooms—these come to us by inheritance. But you have much else to be thankful for. Your husband is a gentleman—’

‘Yes?’ It was more an interrogation than an affirmation.

‘Emphatically, yes. He was educated in the best school in England; it showed great foresight on his father’s part to place him with such a man as Mr Septimus Gray. He made a distinguished name in Oxford, he will make a dis-

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tinguished name in politics. And there is a great project in the air—ha, hum!—a great project in which we are concerned.'

'A great project in which we are concerned!' she exclaimed with apprehension.

'I am free to speak of it to you. In my father's time it was proved that Lynwood Forest was rich in minerals—you may hear this, Vivian. The fact was known before my father came into the estates—mines that only required opening to yield great wealth. But nothing was done; they were allowed to lie unworked.'

'Our ancestors were not tradesmen,' she said, with a fear at her heart. 'They did what was right; the dear old forest is a temple, not a shop. Every tree in it is hallowed by tradition.'

'My dear Julia, it has occurred to me that an ancient name should not live entirely upon its traditions. I am as proud of our history as yourself, but I recognise the necessity of—ha, hum!—going with the times—going with the times.'

'Rather a shoddy kind of argument that, is it not, sir?' asked Vivian.

'I must beg of you not to use that word in conversation with me,' said the earl, drawing himself up. 'It can have no association with anything in which a Lynwood is concerned.'

'But the dear old forest, father,' said Lady Julia. 'Surely they would not tear it up!'

'You speak as if we were about to commit an act of vandalism,' said the earl, testily. 'I repeat, we must go with the times. The mineral wealth of a country should not be allowed to lie fallow. It is incumbent upon us to turn it to its proper uses—it is a duty.'

'Do you not perceive in this the mark of the Beast?' said Vivian, aside to Lady Julia.

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'What is that you are whispering to my daughter, Vivian? Pray make no remarks in my presence that are not intended for my ear. Where did I leave off? Ah, yes—to turn the mineral wealth of the country to its proper uses. I am not the only peer to act in that manner; there is no loss of dignity in it. We must—ha, hum!—consider the toiling thousands. We must not lose sight of our duty to our fellow creatures. There are thousands of poor deserving men out of work; we will give them the means of supporting their families by honest labour.'

'What designs has Mr Moses Mendoza upon the forest?' asked Lady Julia, her lip curling with disdain.

'Have I not made it clear to you? He is forming a company to work our mines.'

'His only object being to benefit the toiling thousands,' she said scornfully.

'It is one of his objects, but, of course, in the nature of things, we shall also benefit. What possible objection can any reasonable being raise to that? A life-long wish will be fulfilled, Julia. I shall have the means of restoring the old castle. The dream of my boyhood's days! The House of Lynwood will once more lift its head.'

An awkward pause ensued, Lady Julia biting her lip to restrain the expression of her indignation, while Vivian St Maur gazed alternately at her and at the earl with a malicious light in his eyes. It was broken by the earl, who was the first to notice the entrance of Raphael Mendoza on the scene.

'Ah, Raphael!' he said, as Lady Julia, not observing her husband's presence, turned aside with Vivian. 'Welcome—welcome!'

'It is a sacrilege,' murmured Lady Julia. 'What will be the next step?'

'Why, the building of a public-house, the Lynwood Arms,' laughed Vivian St Maur, careful to speak in a low

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tone, 'and the Earl of Lynwood and his daughter drawing beer for the toiling thousands. I can see my lord counting the coppers in the till, and the grimy sons of the soil chucking my Lady Julia under the chin.'

CHAPTER XVI

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

RAPHAEL MENDOZA entered swiftly, and shaking hands with the earl, advanced eagerly to his wife.

‘Julia!’ he cried in a happy tone.

His manly face glowed with pleasurable excitement, and no change came across it at the cold glance with which she met his look of ardent love.

‘You have returned,’ she said, in a voice so devoid of interest that she might have been addressing a comparative stranger.

‘As you see,’ he replied gaily. ‘I could not get here a moment earlier. I had to make speeches after the declaration of the poll. Speeches!’ he exclaimed, with a boyish laugh. ‘This last week I have lived on speeches, dreamt of speeches, had speeches for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Ah, I wish you had been with me! It would have inspired me to say something worth the hearing.’

‘If the papers have not misreported you, you seem to have done very well,’ said the earl, with pleasure in his eyes.

‘I did my best—and enjoyed it. It is not given to every man to find his true vocation, as I believe I have found mine. Yes, I enjoyed every minute of it. The sea of faces before me, the cheers, the opposition cries, the excitement of the battle, acted like wine upon me.’ He turned to Julia again. ‘They would have kept me there all day if

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I hadn't dodged them. A special train was waiting for me, and I had to fly for it, with people cheering me all the way to the station. If I had given them any encouragement they would have carried me on their shoulders. I had one experience of that kind, and did not sigh for another.'

'I congratulate you heartily,' said the earl.

'Thank you. Do you not congratulate me, Julia?'

'Oh, yes,' she replied listlessly.

'Your foot is on the ladder, Raphael,' said the earl.

'The papers are correct in their statement of the numbers?'

'Quite correct. A majority of thirty-four.'

'A narrow squeak,' observed Vivian. 'Room for a petition?'

'I think not,' said Raphael, with a smile.

'An ungenerous suggestion, Vivian,' remarked the earl.

'Mr St Maur is a Conservative, sir,' said Raphael.

'That does not excuse it. I also am a Conservative, but it does not prevent me from rejoicing in the victory you have gained.'

'The victory was not mine, sir. The battle was won by my father. I hardly think he was justified in making a sacrifice so vast in my interests.'

'You are his son; he loves you.'

'Yes, he loves me,' said Raphael, with deep feeling, 'and I love and honour him with all my heart. I declare, sir, when the announcement of the gift was made yesterday afternoon I was as much amazed as any man in Birchester. He had given me no hint of his intention to present the battleship to the nation. It has long been common knowledge that Shattock Brothers were building the ship for him, and his enemies—he has them, sir, as we all have—have not spared him in their interpretation of his motive for giving the commission. Some said that he had sold it at a large profit to a foreign nation, but this would have

been a menace to England, and I knew it to be a slander, for I spoke to him on the subject, and he denied it. He was not angry; as you know, sir, he takes everything good-humouredly. He would not allow me to write to the papers in contradiction of the slander. "Let them bark," he said. "One of these days they will know." They know now. He certainly chose a crucial moment for the gift; it had the effect of a great wave rushing in and sweeping all before it.'

'He gave me a hint,' said the earl, 'though I did not understand it. He said—ha, hum!—that he had something up his sleeve.'

Raphael laughed. 'His way of expressing it.'

'So elegant!' said Vivian.

'He has not lived all his life in Mayfair,' said Raphael; 'he has so many good qualities that the results of an imperfect education may be overlooked.'

'I suppose he means to give the ship?' questioned Vivian, and was made aware that he was carrying his insolence to a dangerous length by the startled look that Raphael cast upon him. He hastily added, 'Anything is permissible at election time.'

'This would not be,' said Raphael, gravely. 'My father is a man of honour.' He paused a moment, and when he spoke again it was in his usual genial tone. 'I have a piece of news for you, Mr St Maur, which I think will please you. Julia, you asked me to do something for your cousin. There are no strangers present, and we may speak of it.'

'I did not suppose you would trouble yourself,' she replied.

'Your lightest wish is to me a law,' he said tenderly. 'I have been moving in the matter, I am happy to say successfully. Mr St Maur, a colonial appointment is open to you.'

'What!' cried Vivian, his face flushing with anger.

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'Will he have to leave England?' asked Julia, her eyes averted.

'Naturally.'

'It is good news, Vivian,' said the earl; 'the best thing that could happen to you.'

'You will be attached to the Governor's staff in New South Wales,' explained Raphael. 'The salary'—Vivian winced at the word—'is fifteen hundred a year. An office of distinction; the duties light, the country a garden, and opportunities cropping up like mushrooms.'

With her hand upon his arm Lady Julia stopped the hot words that were rushing to her cousin's lips.

'Let me speak to Vivian apart,' she said to her husband. 'The idea of going so far away has taken him by surprise. You will not mind?'

'Oh, no,' he replied. 'What objection can I have? Believe me, Julia, my only desire is to further your wishes. There is nothing you can ask me that I would refuse.'

'Nothing?' she said, with a strange look in her eyes.

'Nothing,' he replied gaily. 'Try me.'

He drew the earl aside, and the cousins were free to converse without being overheard.

'It is a plot to drive me from you,' said Vivian. 'Did you notice the accent on the word "salary"? As though he were offering a situation to a porter. Look at him. A smiling face, and a heart filled with hatred. He presumes to put himself upon an equality with me—it is not to be borne. I will show him that I am no puppet to be played upon at his will.'

'Speak more calmly, Vivian,' she said. 'He must not hear what you are saying.'

'I don't care if he does,' retorted Vivian, but at the same time moderating his tone. 'You would not wish me to go?'

'I should miss you, of course,' she replied.

‘Miss me! You haven’t another friend. Even your father has fallen completely under the influence of these upstarts. They are all against you, and would drag you down lower than you are already.’

‘Do not think of me. Think of yourself. I must submit to my fate.’

‘You shall not. I stand by you; I should be base indeed to desert you.’

‘I should not regard it as desertion. You could carve out a career for yourself, and I—I would not forget you, Vivian.’

‘There is no consolation in that. Only on one condition would I consent to leave England.’

‘What is the condition, Vivian?’

There was a covert look on his traitorous face as he whispered, ‘That you go with me. It is your only chance of liberty, of independence, of—happiness.’

‘But that is impossible, Vivian.’

‘I don’t see it. Other women have done the same. Why not you?’

‘Because I have not yet lost all sense of self-respect. You must not class me with those other women. Unhappy as I am I know what is due to myself, and it is not for you, Vivian, to tempt me to forget it. I think that my husband has acted out of kindness in obtaining this appointment for you. I asked him—’

‘To send me away?’

‘No. To obtain, if possible, some honourable office for you. And perhaps, Vivian, it would be better if we saw less of each other—’

He interrupted her with a sneer. ‘It is a woman’s privilege, I suppose, to blow hot and cold in the same breath. How much longer will you play with my heart?’

‘Oh, hush! You only add to my misery! If you feel so strongly about the appointment we will tell him that you cannot accept it.’

'I can speak for myself,' he said roughly, and stepped forward. 'Mr Mendoza, I refuse.'

'Refuse!' exclaimed the earl.

'Surely you are not serious,' remonstrated Raphael.

'I am.'

'But why? What is your reason?'

'I refuse to be your tool, your plaything!'

'You forget yourself, Vivian,' said the earl, and would have said more had not Raphael held up his hand.

'It would be the last thing I should wish you to be, Mr St Maur,' said Raphael, gently. 'There must be some other objection.'

Lady Julia held her breath.

'I will not be driven out of England!' exclaimed St Maur.

'But, consider—'

'I have considered. You will allow me to be the best judge of my affairs.'

'I regret the spirit in which you meet me,' remarked Raphael. 'Under the circumstances there is nothing more to be said. I am sorry, Julia.'

'Vivian has not expressed himself very clearly,' she said. 'He is so attached to London that the idea of living elsewhere distresses him. Can you not obtain an appointment for him here? You are entering public life—you will need a secretary.'

'If that will content Mr St Maur,' said Raphael, readily, 'let it be so. How does he feel on the matter?'

'It is better than the other thing,' said Vivian, sullenly.

'Then we will consider it settled.'

'I thank you,' said Julia.

'I am rewarded,' he replied with a bright smile.

Her unsympathetic reception of him had caused him no uneasiness. He did not, indeed, set it down to a lack of sympathy, but to the habitual coldness of her nature. Some men would have been tortured by a like coldness on the

part of the women they love. Not so Raphael Mendoza. Julia had never shown warmth in her behaviour towards him. He had observed that she was cold and reserved to all with whom she came in contact, and he ascribed it to temperament, birth and breeding. In his great love for her he had created an ideal which he worshipped; he did not doubt that beneath that icy surface a soft sweet fire was burning, which in its own good time would break through and shine upon his life. He was quite unaware of the real state of her feelings, for only to her cousin Vivian was she in the habit of unbosoming herself of the fancied wrong which she was nursing to her misery. Her husband had never witnessed any of these passionate outbursts of feeling, and had no suspicion of them. He was one of those fortunate men who draw happiness from their own bright estimate of surrounding circumstance. The image of Julia was ever present in his mind, and in his thoughts of her he painted with a fairy brush, investing his ideal with all that was best and noblest in woman's nature. Had Julia seen this depiction of herself she would have been startled into a juster opinion of her husband, and it may be that a tenderer chord in her heart would have been touched.

Apart from his blind worship of the woman he loved, Raphael Mendoza was a resolute man, scrupulously honourable in his dealings, and clear-sighted in his discernment of character. Much of this discernment he inherited from his father; but with the older man it was intuitive, while with the younger it was the outcome of a logical mind which arrived at its conclusions by reason rather than by instinct. It was singular, therefore, that he should so readily have fallen in with Julia's suggestion that he should make Vivian St Maur his secretary. He did it simply to please her, for he had no expectation that Vivian was fitted for secretarial duties. That Vivian was anything worse than a man of indolent habits did not occur to him; he had no intimates

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among the votaries of the modern school for scandal, and had heard nothing to Vivian's discredit. If the new secretary proved to be useless no great harm would be done. He would pay him his salary, and Julia would be satisfied. Her simple expression of thanks was a sufficient reward.

Thus, in this great mansion, went on the drama of human love and human duplicity, of trust, rebellion and treachery, with all their momentous issues, of the conflict between false heart and true.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TWO SECRETARIES

To all in the room, with the exception of Raphael, the abrupt appearance of Moses Mendoza was a relief. He entered without being announced, and was accompanied by his secretary, Mr Carpe.

The newcomers presented a marked contrast. Mr Carpe, who had in his earlier years practised as a solicitor, was tall and spare; his face was white, almost bloodless; his movements uniformly quiet and subdued; his voice in keeping; his eyes generally directed earthwards; his whole manner that of a man who was guarding precious secrets. Moses Mendoza was round and full-bodied; his complexion florid, but not more so than was natural in a dark-blooded man; his movements alert; his voice rich and mellow, despite its guttural accent; his eyes sparkling with animation; his whole manner that of one who found the world a very good world to live in. Time had dealt kindly with him; good temper is a preservative of good looks, a cheerful spirit begets a cheerful face, a grateful heart is a beautifier of the countenance—axioms which women who watch fading youth in a querulous spirit, and rebel against advancing years, would do well to take to heart. Moses Mendoza looked very little older than on the occasion of his first visit to Mr Septimus Gray, and all his distinguishing characteristics were in evidence as he held out his arms to his son, the movement releasing a

number of newspapers which he brought with him, and which Mr Carpe picked up as they fell to the ground.

‘Raphe!’

‘Father!’

They stood a moment or two in silence, their hands clasped, gazing at each other with smiles and nods. Love, pride, gratitude, never received more eloquent expression than in the utterance of these simple words. The earl looked on with an approving smile; Lady Julia’s eyes were averted; there was a sneer on the face of Vivian St Maur; Mr Carpe was deferentially observant.

‘Well, my boy,’ presently said Moses Mendoza, ‘you’re a M.P. now.’

‘Thanks to you, father.’

‘Why, what ’ad I to do with it?’ exclaimed Moses Mendoza, with twinkling eyes.

‘It was a heavy price to pay for the honour,’ said Raphael. ‘Too great a sacrifice.’

‘Not a bit of it, Raphe. What do I live for, what do I live for? Carpe, show them papers to the earl. We’ve got our boy back again Julia, eh? See the conquering ’ero comes.’

Raphael laughed; his father mopped his face with a bandanna pocket handkerchief. While they were talking, and the earl was looking through the papers, Mr Carpe beckoned to Vivian.

‘How do you do, Mr St Maur?’

‘How do you do, Mr Carpe?’

‘Have you heard of his doings on the Stock Exchange to-day?’ pointing with his thumb to Moses Mendoza.

‘Everybody has heard,’ said Vivian.

Something strange in the manner of these two men—as though they were warily watching each other.

‘Step a little this way,’ said Mr Carpe. ‘We don’t want

everyone to hear. It was a grand *coup*. It took even me by surprise.'

'That doesn't often happen.'

'Not often, not often.'

'A pretty state of things when a man like him can make hundreds of thousands in a day, and a man like me is left out in the cold. How much did he make?'

'You must ask him that yourself, Mr St Maur. He tells no one anything; he is as close as wax.'

'But you are close also, Mr Carpe,' said Vivian, who was never able to resist the promptings of his malicious nature. 'There is little you cannot find out when you set your mind on it.'

Mr Carpe's face was expressionless. 'It is kind of you to pay me the compliment. I do my best—I do my best, but I am free to confess that Mr Moses Mendoza is more than my match.'

'How much did you make out of it, Mr Carpe?'

'Out of what?'

'The Money-bag's grand *coup*.'

'Do not refer to him so flippantly. Money is to be revered. I reverence it.'

'I know you do. I haven't the same feeling towards it myself.'

'Really, now? I should have thought otherwise, but I am open to correction. It is my habit to keep an open mind. How much did I make out of it? I grieve to say, not one penny. I was entirely in ignorance of what was going on. I fear there is something lacking in me.'

'Always backing the wrong horse, Mr Carpe? My case.'

'Yes, it is unfortunate. By the way, the little speculations you asked me to make for you have not been very successful. They continue to be not very successful. Since the last settlement there is a balance against you of nearly ninety pounds. I have the statement in my pocket, but it

would perhaps be unadvisable to submit the papers to you here.'

'I don't want to see the infernal figures.'

'Most unbusinesslike. You can look them over in my house. Is it convenient to you to let me have a cheque?'

'I have never been so hard up in my life, Mr Carpe,' replied Vivian, with a shifting look.

'Dear me—dear me! Well, well, we will carry it on. Another matter, Mr St Maur. I gather from Mr Moses Mendoza that a colonial appointment is offered to you. He assisted Lady Julia's husband to obtain it for you.'

'I thought as much. The low upstart!'

'Have you accepted it?'

'How many more questions are you going to ask me? I have not accepted it.'

'It is as well,' said Mr Carpe, rubbing his hands slowly over one another. 'You could not go alone, and I should not like my daughter to go so far away from me.' A shadow passed across Vivian's face. 'We shall see you this evening?'

'I am afraid not. Another engagement—'

'Must not be allowed to stand in the way.'

'Must not!' exclaimed Vivian, his face flushing.

'Must not. We dine at the usual time—six. An unfashionable hour, but we are unfashionable people. Even for you, Mr St Maur, I cannot alter my habits of living.'

'Who asks you to do so?'

'No one, no one, but Gertrude has spoken of the hour as being too early for you. You will come?'

'Have I not told you I have another engagement?'

'Yes, you have told me. Put it off, Mr St Maur. Gertrude expects you, and has been all day preparing for you. She is always most anxious about the dinner when you join us. It is "Vivian likes this, Vivian likes that." She puts me to much extra expense. I raise no objection. It is a happiness to me to see my child happy.'

'Did she tell you to speak to me?'

'No, I speak on my own account. She does not see what I see. She does not suspect what I suspect.'

He spoke without any display of warmth; his voice was scarcely raised above a whisper, and only a guilty man would have detected a menace in it.

'May I ask, Mr Carpe, what it is you see and suspect?' asked Vivian, uneasily.

'There is no objection to your asking, but I do not feel it incumbent upon me at present—at present, Mr St Maur—to answer questions to which you yourself can supply the answer, nor to enter into a discussion which might take an acrimonious turn. What I have to study is my child's peace of mind. Be advised, Mr St Maur. You will come?'

'Oh, very well—I'll come,' said Vivian, impatiently.

'Do not be late. They are speaking of you.'

'Glad to 'ear it, earl, if it gives you and Lady Julia pleasure,' Moses Mendoza was saying. 'I shouldn't 'ave picked Mr St Maur out myself to be my secretary, but that's another pair of shoes.'

'What does he mean?' asked Mr Carpe.

'Mr Raphael Mendoza has asked me to be his secretary,' replied Vivian, in the tone of a man upon whom some misfortune had fallen.

'To please his wife, I understand,' said Mr Carpe, with a furtive glance at Vivian.

'To please himself, rather,' retorted Vivian.

'You accepted the post.'

'Yes.'

'It will be good news for Gertrude. She will be delighted. What is the salary?'

'There was no mention of salary,' said Vivian, resentfully. 'You have been begging this and that of me, Mr Carpe, and I must beg of you not to speak to me as if I were an errand-boy.'

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'Still, for the sake of all parties,' said Mr Carpe, 'I should stipulate that the—shall we call it honorarium?—be adequate. Disagreeable as it may be to you, it is impossible in such matters to do away with the commercial element.'

'Look at 'im,' said Moses Mendoza to the earl. 'M.P. for Birchester! My boy's a M.P. It's like a dream come true. Can 'old 'is 'ead 'igh—as 'igh as the 'ighest. Nothink to be ashamed of there, eh, earl?'

'Indeed not,' said the smiling nobleman.

'You ought to be proud of 'im—by my life you ought!' continued Moses Mendoza. 'He's a honour to the family. There's no telling where 'e'll be this time next year. Think of Disraeli. There ain't a lord or a dook in England that ain't proud of 'im. 'Im and Raphe was born within a stone's throw of one another. Plain Benjamin Disraeli when he come into the world, Earl of Beaconsfield when he went out of it.' His face glowed with enthusiasm. 'Them papers you've been looking over speak well of our boy, earl.'

'And of you, Mr Mendoza.'

'Oh, me! I'm nobody. Julia, I've got somethink for you. A lot of clever chaps tried to take a rise out of old Moses Mendoza, but I got wind of their little game, and I made 'em pay for it. It'll be a long time before they try agin. I've 'ad a lucky day, and I said to myself, "Julia shall 'ave a bit." So I stopped at 'Unt and Roskell's, and bought you this.' He drew from his pocket a jewel case, and opened it; on the velvet bed lay a magnificent diamond bracelet. 'Cost me six thousand guineas—not a penny less. There you are, my dear. Raphe, put it on 'er. By my life, you look like a queen! Ha, ha, ha! They'll think twice before they try to get the wrong side of old Moses agin. Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!'

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW A FINANCIAL EDITOR EARNED THE SOUBRIQUET OF 'PRO AND CON'

THE great Lynwood Forest Mining Company was not 'boomed.' There was no flaming show of advertisements in the daily papers, and certain journals devoted exclusively to finance touted in vain for bribes in payment for puffs. Extravagant sums were demanded for the insertion of leading articles and favourable notices, not in a single instance with success, and some stories relating to the rapacious crew which Moses Mendoza himself put into circulation gave much amusement to the disinterested. One story especially was greatly relished.

A few days before the flotation of the company a Mr Schonberg called upon Moses Mendoza, who knew the man and the paper he owned and edited. A clerk who was present when Mr Schonberg was admitted to Moses Mendoza's private office evinced a disposition to remain. After the interchange of the usual salutations Mr Schonberg winked and pointed to the clerk. Moses Mendoza took the hint, and bade the clerk retire. Mr Schonberg closed the door upon him, and a window being open, closed that also. Moses Mendoza offered no obstruction.

'Private business, Mr Mendoza,' said Mr Schonberg, with an air of importance. 'We can't be too careful.'

'Quite so,' said Moses Mendoza. 'Smoke?'

He pushed a box of large Havannahs across the table, and

the visitor took one. The next minute both gentlemen were puffing away, and comfortably reclining in easy-chairs.

‘You expected to see me,’ said Mr Schonberg.

‘I thought it likely,’ responded Moses Mendoza.

‘Upon business,’ said Mr Schonberg.

‘Upon business,’ responded Moses Mendoza.

‘It is a pleasure to deal with a man like you. You know what’s what.’

‘Ought to by this time,’ chuckled Moses Mendoza.

‘All the rigs.’

‘All the rigs.’

They laughed genially in company, and each gentleman rubbed his hands.

‘Coming to the point without any nonsensical palaver,’ proceeded Mr Schonberg, ‘the Lynwood Forest Mining Company.’

‘The Lynwood Forest Mining Company,’ responded Moses Mendoza.

‘When will the prospectus be out?’

‘Next Tuesday.’

‘And the allotment?’

‘On Wednesday.’

‘What’s the capital?’

‘Three millions.’

Mr Schonberg winked again; Moses Mendoza followed suit; then another genial rubbing of hands.

‘Will it float?’ asked Mr Schonberg.

‘Ain’t got a doubt of it.’

‘Fully subscribed?’

‘Over subscribed.’

‘Don’t make too sure,’ said Mr Schonberg, rubbing his chin. ‘There’s many a slip ’twixt cup and lip.’

‘You make me quite nervous,’ said Moses Mendoza.

‘I’ll set it all right for you. You know my paper?’

‘Know it well.’

'We can do wonders for you. Practically, make or break. What do you propose?'

'No, no,' said Moses Mendoza, 'it's for you to propose.'

'Well, I have brought with me the manuscript of two leading articles, that will make a column and a half each in our largest type, one of which will appear in our paper next Monday, the day before your prospectus is advertised.'

'When will the other appear?'

'It will never appear. One's black, the other's white; one cracks the company up, the other runs it down.'

'Ow clever you gentlemen of the press are!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza, lifting up his hands in admiration. 'Ow clever—ow clever!'

'Not half so clever as Mr Moses Mendoza.'

'Oh, oh!' protested Moses Mendoza. 'You make me blush.'

'Proof of the pudding's in the eating,' said Mr Schonberg, grumblingly. 'For every pound I've got, you've got a thousand.' Moses Mendoza put on a penitent look. 'That's not what I call a fair division. You get the plums, we get the pips. I'd like to know where you promoters would be without us. We lead public opinion. We say to the public, "Buy," and they buy. We say, "Don't buy," and they button up their pockets. It isn't only our leading articles, but our little paragraphs, our letters from correspondents, our answers to correspondents. Bogus correspondents, you know. This is the manufactory.' He tapped his forehead.

'I see,' said Moses Mendoza.

'You would like to read the articles I've written on the flotation of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company, wouldn't you? Here they are.'

'I'd rather you'd read 'em to me. I ain't much of a dab at reading another man's writing. Can't 'ardly read my own.'

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I shall understand 'em better if you read 'em to me. And I'd take it kind of you if you'd read slow.'

'I've no objection. Which will you have first—Pro or Con?'

'What's Pro or Con?' asked Moses Mendoza, innocently.

'Pro, for ; Con, against,' replied Mr Schonberg, with a shrug of contempt at Mr Moses Mendoza's ignorance.

'Ah,' said Moses Mendoza, a light breaking upon him.

'Pro cracks the company up, Con runs it down.'

'Just so. Which will you have first?'

'Which you like.'

'Pro, then. Listen.'

It was an outrageously fulsome article, in which the prospects of the company were spoken of in grossly glowing terms. Never had such a golden opportunity been offered to the British public, who would assuredly need but little urging to take advantage of it. The names of two of the directors, the Earl of Lynwood and Mr Moses Mendoza, who would join the board after allotment, were a sufficient guarantee of the soundness of the undertaking. The Earl of Lynwood was above reproach ; Mr Moses Mendoza was a tower of strength. So complete was the confidence the City had in these gentlemen that the capital would be subscribed eight, ten, twelve times over. During the past week the shares had been dealt in at one-and-a-half premium, and were steadily on the rise ; allotment day would see the premium doubled. It had been proved by the best mining experts in the country that Lynwood Forest was fabulously rich in minerals, etc., etc., etc.

'That's Pro,' said Mr Schonberg, lighting another cigar. 'It will send the company up like a rocket. Shall I read Con?'

'If you please,' said Moses Mendoza.

In a voice of deep portent Mr Schonberg read the second article. It was as outrageously denunciatory as the

first was extravagantly laudatory. Never had such a bare-faced swindle been brought before the public as Mr Moses Mendoza's Lynwood Forest Mining Company, and the attempt to launch it, with the unblushing appropriation of the enormous capital by a band of unscrupulous promoters, was a national menace which struck at the very roots of a sound financial system. The public would know how to deal with these men. It could not be too widely known that there were no mines of proved value in the forest. So many attempts of a like nature had been made upon the pockets of honest investors—but none on so gigantic a scale as this—that it was high time an example was made, etc., etc., etc.

'That's Con,' said Mr Schonberg, complacently, when he had read to the end.

'Sounds bad,' said Moses Mendoza, in a lugubrious voice; 'I don't know as I ever 'eard anythink quite so bad as that.'

'I flatter myself it will do the trick,' said Mr Schonberg. 'Such an article would smash the best company that ever was floated. On the day before your advertisements appear we should print a hundred thousand copies containing it, unless'—he spoke more slowly now—'we come to an arrangement; of which, no doubt, you see the advisability.'

'I don't know—I don't know,' murmured Moses Mendoza, beating his hands. 'All this is very dreadful.'

'It is meant to be. Take my advice, Mr Mendoza, if you happen to have the whip hand. When you strike, strike hard.'

'I will,' groaned Moses Mendoza. 'Strike 'ard—strike 'ard.'

'Tickle 'em up, you know.'

'Yes, tickle 'em up—tickle 'em up.'

'And don't let on. Keep everything dark till you're ready to come down on them.'

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'Oh, 'ow artful—'ow artful!'

'Now, I'm going to be very plain with you,' said Mr Schonberg.

'Do—do!'

'The price of the Pro article,' said Mr Schonberg, with a thrill of satisfaction at the prospective success of his scheme, 'the article which ensures the success of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company, is a cheque for five thousand guineas, made payable to bearer, which you will be kind enough to draw out at once—'

'Mr Schonberg!' gasped Moses Mendoza.

'And a present of two thousand shares in the company. The terms are ridiculously low, but I have no wish to be exorbitant.'

'Ain't it very dear for a Pro article?' asked Moses Mendoza, shaking his head.

'Cheap as dirt,' contended Mr Schonberg. 'I am surprised at my own moderation. Think what it means to you, Mr Mendoza.'

'I'm thinking—I'm thinking. Would you mind telling me what's the price of the Con article—the one that's going to ruin me?'

'Now, now, Mr Mendoza! You're joking.'

'Give you my word I ain't. Just for curiosity, what's the price of the Con?'

'Why,' replied Mr Schonberg, with a bland smile, 'we shouldn't charge you anything for that, you know.'

'Do you mean to say I can 'ave it for nothink?'

'That is my meaning,' said Mr Schonberg, thinking that this was really one of Moses Mendoza's jokes.

'It's so much cheaper than the Pro,' mused Moses Mendoza. 'A reg'lar bargain, that's what I call it. Mr Schonberg, I'll take the Con.'

'Come, come,' expostulated Mr Schonberg, 'let's be serious.'

'I am serious.'

'I don't understand you.'

'Don't you? That's funny. You come and give me the choice of two articles, a Pro and a Con, and I choose the Con. They're both chock full of lies—'

'Mr Mendoza!' cried Mr Schonberg, rising in wrath, his face convulsed with rage.

'Chock full of lies,' continued Moses Mendoza. 'I 'ardly know which is the worst, but I wouldn't 'ave the Pro article at any price. It's very nice of you to give me the choice.'

'You can't be in earnest—you can't be!'

'I give you my word I am,' said Moses Mendoza, his face beaming with good humour. 'Only I wouldn't like you to go away with a wrong notion in your 'ead. That would be a pity, wouldn't it? I've 'ad to do with a good many companies, Mr Schonberg, and there ain't one that's come to grief. That ain't a bad thing to be able to say, is it? Now, of all the companies I've 'ad to do with the Lynwood Forest Mining Company will be found to be the soundest and the most flourishing, and if I thought it wasn't going to pay 'andsome dividends I'd wash my 'ands of it this minute. That's all I've got to say, Mr Schonberg. 'Ave another cigar?'

Mr Schonberg bit his nether lip in mortification. 'Have you counted the cost, Mr Mendoza?'

'I 'aven't counted nothink. Got no call to count. Going?'

'Is this your last word?'

'I think so—I think so. Do take another cigar!'

'You'll laugh on the wrong side of your mouth presently, Mr Mendoza.'

'It don't matter to me which side I laugh; any side 'll do, so long as I enjoy myself. I never met a littery man 'arf so clever as you are, Mr Schonberg. What a treasure you'd be to a straightforward, honest daily paper!'

'You shall smart for this,' said Mr Schonberg, livid with anger. 'If I don't queer your pitch next Monday morning, I'll change my name.'

'Per'aps you'll 'ave to,' said Moses Mendoza, and his eyes twinkled with fun as his visitor departed, slamming the door behind him.

On Monday morning Mr Schonberg's paper, *The Financial Slasher*, appeared, with the Con article printed in large type. To ensure a wide circulation an extra number of boys had been engaged to sell it in the streets. He had advertised in all the daily papers, calling the public in general to read the 'Exposure of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company in *The Financial Slasher*.' He had also hired scores of 'sandwich-men' to parade the streets with flaming posters to the same effect.

He rose later than usual on this morning, for he had remained in the printing office till past midnight to see that everything was correct before *The Financial Slasher* went to press.

Sitting at his breakfast table Mr Schonberg read his article with visible satisfaction. 'I should like to see Mr Moses Mendoza's face when he reads it,' he thought. 'If company promoters get it into their heads that they can float their companies without the support of *The Financial Slasher*, it would be the ruin of me.' Then he opened a daily paper to see how his advertisement looked, and whether it was in a conspicuous part of the column. He found it, and found something else, which almost caused his eyes to start out of his head. Below his advertisement, which occupied two inches of space, was another, which occupied a space of six times two inches. At the head of this advertisement was the following :—

'A Financial Editor exposed. Now ready, price One Penny, at every newspaper shop and bookstall in the country, Two Leading Articles, entitled "Pro and Con,"

written by the Editor of *The Financial Slasher*. Together with the True History of "Pro and Con," in which is described how the Articles came to be written. With certain Remarks thereon. A First Edition of One Million copies is now issued.'

He snatched up the other daily papers, and saw the same ominous advertisement, occupying the same extensive space, completely dwarfing his own announcement, and making it appear very small and mean. Moreover, several of the papers contained a paragraph to the effect that the editor had received a copy of the pamphlet, 'Pro and Con,' in which a strange charge was made against a certain financial editor. 'In a future issue we shall review this pamphlet, and for the present content ourselves with saying that the flagrant exposure is due to the courage of an eminent financier, whose patriotic gift of a battleship to the nation will live long in the memory of his countrymen.'

Starting up from the breakfast table Mr Schonberg rushed into the streets, and saw his own sandwich-men' paddling along with the flaming posters he had had printed. But his heart sank as he beheld three other 'sandwich-men' marching before and behind each of his agents, enclosing them, as it were, in a trap, who carried bills much more handsomely printed than his own, on which was emblazoned the advertisement of 'Pro and Con' in the daily papers. He also encountered his newsboys calling out '*The Financial Slasher! The Financial Slasher!*' But for every one of his agents there were a dozen others calling out "'Pro and Con!" "Pro and Con!" Read "Pro and Con!" A financial editor exposed!' Where one bought his paper a dozen bought 'Pro and Con.' He purchased a copy, and retired with it into a back street, where he furtively opened it. He could scarcely believe that he was awake, for in the pamphlet were printed, word for word, the two leading articles he had read to Moses Mendoza in the

privacy of that gentleman's office; also a trenchantly-written account of his interview with Moses Mendoza, the terms he demanded for the insertion of the Pro article, and the threat that the Con article would be printed in Monday's issue of *The Financial Slasher* if that demand were not complied with. On the first page of the pamphlet was printed a sworn declaration that the million copies had been struck off several hours before the publication of Mr Schonberg's paper.

Mr Schonberg writhed. Had it been the fashion to do so, he would have torn his hair. He did so in a metaphorical sense, and bewailed the hard fortune that he lived in a world that contained a foe so formidable and astute as Moses Mendoza.

But how had the articles Pro and Con been obtained? No person except himself had seen the favourable article, no person except Moses Mendoza had heard it read. With respect to the Con article there might have been treachery in his own printing office. A compositor might have copied it and carried it to Moses Mendoza. But this was impossible with respect to the Pro article.

He groaned to think that he had advised Moses Mendoza to strike hard.

Continuing his walk to the City he found that the streets were flooded with Moses Mendoza's 'sandwich-men' and paper boys, and that nearly every person he met had in his hands a copy of 'Pro and Con.' The boys were jubilant at the trade they were doing; the faces of the 'sandwich-men' did not wear the mournful, woe-begone, hopeless expression peculiar to that humble class of toiler. On the contrary, they were radiant, for Moses Mendoza had stipulated with the contractor that the poor fellows should receive double pay, and that at the end of the day, when their weary trudging in the gutters was over, they should have a dinner of roast beef and apple pudding, moistened

with a pint of beer each. They blessed the name of Moses Mendoza.

So great was the rush for 'Pro and Con' that you could not get near the newspaper shop in the Royal Exchange. Not a City man who did not buy it, and many bought more than one copy, to keep as a souvenir of Moses Mendoza's wonderfully courageous move. He had, indeed, the heart of a lion, to which some would add, the wisdom of the serpent. But his character was established on other grounds also. He knew how to bear himself in any condition of life. In his days of poverty, as now in the days of his riches, he had proved himself equal to either fortune. He was always making wonderful moves. Never did the enemy find him napping. On this morning a remark of the head of the Rothschilds was freely quoted. 'If Moses Mendoza were an educated man and in Parliament he would become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would prove himself one of the best that ever held the office. As for the Lynwood Forest Mining Company, if anything were wanting to make it a complete success he has supplied it here'—tapping a copy of 'Pro and Con' which he had purchased on his way to St Swithin's Lane.

Undoubtedly Mr Schonberg was vanquished; everyone he knew greeted him with a peculiar smile which caused him great uneasiness.

'You've put your foot in it this time,' said one acquaintance.

'What an ass you were to think you could tackle old Mo Mendoza,' said another.

'A nice thing you've done for us!' said a brother black-mailer. 'Why, you've given the whole bag of tricks away!'

An impudent clerk exclaimed, 'Hullo! Here's Pro and Con. He looks as if he'd just stepped out of a nettlebush.'

The nickname caught the public fancy. Pro and Con—Pro and Con. It came trippingly off the tongue, and

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sounded like an old friend. From that moment he was no longer Mr Schonberg ; the name was effaced ; he was Pro and Con. The peculiar smiles grew still more peculiar. When the laugh is against a man he is lost. Nothing kills like ridicule.

What made the exposure more serious for him was that he lost his power over even the shadiest of company promoters, who instinctively recognised that a recommendation of their scheme in the columns of *The Financial Slasher* would be fatal, and that an onslaught from Pro and Con would do them more good than harm. The blackmailing days of Mr Schonberg were at an end. One harpy the less in London.

How Moses Mendoza obtained a verbatim copy of the two articles is easily explained. The clerk who was in the private office when Mr Schonberg entered was a shorthand writer, in his employer's confidence. They had a code of private signals, one of which was that, seated in an adjoining room close to the dividing wall, he should take a verbatim note of all that passed therein. This signal was given to the clerk, and he had taken down the articles Pro and Con as Mr Schonberg read them aloud. The defeated and distracted editor never succeeded in obtaining the key to the mystery.

Mr Carpe was greatly perplexed over the incident. His duties as Moses Mendoza's secretary were carried out in an office at a little distance from the millionaire's place of business. It was only when he was summoned that he presented himself in his employer's private room, and he knew nothing of the code of signals between that gentleman and the confidential clerk.

On the eventful Monday, Mr Vivian St Maur paid Mr Carpe a visit to learn from him the particulars of the affair. Mr Carpe pleaded ignorance. Vivian's shrug of his shoulders expressed his disbelief in Mr Carpe's ignorance.

Mr Carpe, understanding what the shrug meant, showed no annoyance.

'Even if I did know,' he said with a bland smile, 'it would be improper to reveal Mr Mendoza's secrets.'

'I am not asking you to reveal anything,' said Vivian, loftily. 'Let the matter drop. Will the company float?'

'Will a duck swim?' replied Mr Carpe. 'Mr St Maur, it is useless contending against such a man. Best go with the stream.'

'My cursed luck sticks to me,' said Vivian.

Mr Carpe nodded gloomily. He held it as a grievance that Moses Mendoza did not confide in him. As a matter of fact the financier confided in no man. He could keep his own counsel, and the relations he established between this and that employé or agent were never divulged to a third person. He adopted the same tactics with his brokers. He never informed one broker that he was employing others. He gave them instructions, and saw that they were carried out. Occasionally he played a criss-cross game, one of his brokers buying a certain stock, another selling it. He did not do this to entrap and deceive the public, but generally to circumvent the tricks of speculators who were insidiously attacking his interests, and whose greatest pleasure would have been to bring about his downfall.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DIVERSIONS OF MOSES MENDOZA

MUCH surprise was evinced at the modest manner in which the prospects and advantages of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company were set before the public. Speculators and investors and all the hungry hangers-on of the money market were prepared for startling advertisements with great headlines, loud flourishings of trumpets with which certain ventures are heralded—much cry and little wool; but were regaled instead with a single column in the daily papers, printed in the usual small type. For the successful launching of the company nothing more was needed. Applications literally poured in, and people grew frantic in their pursuit of shares. Certain friends of ours—Mrs Vayne, Madame Blitz, Sir Philip Bramble, Captain Verjuice, and Lord Chilcott—buzzed about the Earl of Lynwood and Moses Mendoza, the busiest of bees mad for golden honey. The earl was gracious and dignified, and said that all the business arrangements were in the hands of his good friend, Mr Moses Mendoza. That gentleman tantalised them by saying, 'We shall see—we shall see.' Mrs Vayne paid a private visit to Raphael Mendoza, and entreated him to use his influence.

'Do put in a good word for me with your dear father,' she said. 'A gentle hint from you—'

Raphael smilingly shook his head. 'Had you not better

speak to him yourself, Mrs Vayne? I have nothing to do with his business affairs.'

'Thank you so much,' she said effusively. 'You are the soul of good nature.'

Away she went to the City to inform Moses Mendoza that his son was extremely anxious that he should promise her an allotment. The old man knew perfectly well how much of this was true, but he good-humouredly said if she sent in her application he would see what could be done for her.

'My mind is at ease,' she said diplomatically. 'I say to everyone, "Mr Moses Mendoza never forgets a promise. His word is as good as another man's bond." I can't be sufficiently grateful to you.'

Sir Philip Bramble went another and much less skilful way to work. Contriving to meet the Earl of Lynwood, he drew him into a conversation upon the prospects of the company. The earl was not quite so clear as Sir Philip wished him to be. He pressed the point injudiciously, and said in a confidential tone, as of one conspirator speaking to another,—

'There is no doubt of it, is there? There really *are* mines in Lynwood Forest?'

'How dare you ask me such a question?' exclaimed the earl. 'How dare you?'

'No offence, no offence,' hastily said Sir Philip, and hurried away, much disturbed in his mind. His state was that of a timid woman, prepared for a dip in the sea, who shivers when her feet touch the waves.

He fared little better with Moses Mendoza, who advised him to watch the market.

'Watch the market?' asked Sir Philip.

'Watch the market,' repeated Moses Mendoza.

'Yes, Mr Mendoza,' said Sir Philip, vaguely. 'And then?'

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Moses Mendoza motioned Sir Philip to come close, and putting his mouth close to the questioner's ear said in a whisper, 'Let it alone.'

'Let it alone!' cried the mystified man. 'Why?'

Moses Mendoza gave him a mysterious look; the mysterious look was followed by a mysterious laugh; the mysterious laugh was followed by the sudden jumping of Moses Mendoza into a hansom cab. The driver flourished his whip and drove away, his fare leaning back and laughing now so heartily that the tears came into his eyes. Moses Mendoza was the idol of the London cabmen; never less than double fare; and a hundred pounds every year for a day in the country for the children of the gondoliers of the road.

Sir Philip Bramble gazed after the receding cab in perplexity. Moses Mendoza's conduct was most unsatisfactory to a man chronically suspicious of men and motives. Then a light broke upon him.

'He wants to put me off,' he muttered. 'He wants to keep it all to himself! I'll send in my application the moment the prospectus is out.'

The one person who kept himself cool and collected in the midst of all the excitement was Moses Mendoza. There was on his face the same genial smile, in his eyes the same merry twinkle, in his voice the same joyful chuckle. The golden tide was flowing for him, and he knew that nothing short of an earthquake or the heavens coming down could stop it. From morning till night the office was besieged, but there was no flurry, no confusion. He had a genius for the administration of large affairs, and he was in his element. His vitality was astonishing; and success rewarded him in this, as it had done in all his other ventures. Had the capital of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company been ten millions instead of three it would have been fully subscribed.

A week after all the letters of allotment and regret had been sent out, he and the Earl of Lynwood stood at the door of his office.

It was evening, and the earl had called in his carriage to ask him to dine with him. The day's work was over, and a strange stillness was stealing over the city. There were no signs of the feverish throbbings, the heartburns, the hopes and fears, the sordid scheming, the wild clutchings at the mantle of Plutus, which make London's money mart the arena of the most agitating passions of which human nature is capable. The glow of the setting sun was in the heavens; peace prevailed in the spaces which witnessed the daily conflict.

'Thank you all the same, earl,' said Moses Mendoza. 'I can't come to-night; I've got a lot of things to do.'

'You have always a lot of things to do, Mr Mendoza,' said the earl. 'Do you ever get tired?'

'Ardly ever, earl; no time for it.'

'It is wonderful,' pursued the earl, 'how you contrive to keep a level head in such a place as this, and with the work you do. An hour of such excitement sets mine in a whirl.'

'You ain't used to it, as I am. I was born in the thick of it. And you see, earl, this is a big affair—'

'It is, it is.'

'And I'm the responsible party.'

'Not entirely, Mr Mendoza. I share the responsibility with you.'

'No, earl, you're out of it. Anyway, you've got nothink to do with the sailing of the ship.'

'That's true. I should only do mischief,' said the earl, ruefully. 'I fear that I am a very useless person.'

'Not at all, earl. What should we 'ave done without the honourable name of Lynwood? It's the gilt on the gingerbread. That's what brings the people round the stall. If it 'adn't been for the name of Lynwood it'd been a 'underd

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to one agin the floating of the ship. But it *is* afloat, and sailing on the waters.'

'And you its captain, Mr Mendoza,' said the earl, with a cheerful smile.

'That's what I am, I suppose,' replied Mendoza, 'and my place is on the bridge. It ain't easy sailing, earl. It ain't only thunder and lightning, and pitch darkness, that the captain of such a ship 'as to fight against. It's torpedo boats, foreign ships sailing under false colours, and treachery among 'is own crew. He must be full of eyes, and not one of 'em shut. Let 'im lose 'is 'ead a single minute, and he's done for. Crash comes a cannon ball through the side of 'is ship, boom comes another and rips up a sail. It's the signal for a 'underd more. But he doesn't give 'em a chance to let fly at 'im. He stands on the bridge and bawls 'is orders through 'is speaking trumpet. The safety of the ship and cargo, the lives of the crew and passengers, all depend on 'im, and he knows it. So he does 'is duty, and does it straight like a man, without making a fuss over it. If you think he don't enjoy it, you're mistook. And it's odds on, earl, that some-think more depends on 'im.' Moses Mendoza's voice softened. 'He's got someone at 'ome that he loves—a wife, a child, that he's always thinking of. What he does is more for their sakes than for 'is own.'

The earl nodded kindly. 'You are thinking of Raphael?'

'And of Lady Julia. The richer we leave 'em the 'igher they'll mount. It's money that makes the mare to go—money, money, money!'

This peroration brought them to the door of the earl's carriage. They shook hands and each went his way, the Earl of Lynwood riding westward, Moses Mendoza walking Whitechapel way.

Had any person taken note of the millionaire's actions on this occasion he would have been greatly astonished, and

would have been puzzled to account for them. He would have observed that Moses Mendoza walked at first very rapidly, and that he selected the less frequented sides of the streets for his peregrinations; that he looked about him frequently and with an air of extreme caution, as though fearing to be recognised; that when he reached the spaces immortalised by that wondrous wizard, the Shakespeare of fiction, and where surely, in the dim watches of the night, the spirits of Sam Weller, Sol Gills and Captain Cuttle are wont to linger, he suddenly dived down a thoroughfare to the right, leading to the Tower of London; that here his footsteps slackened, and he became still more careful that his movements were not observed; that, slipping into a solitary courtyard on the left, he pulled from his coat pocket a grey wig, and beard and whiskers, which he dexterously fitted to his head and face; and that, finally, he emerged into the wider thoroughfare of Whitechapel a transformed man—no longer Moses Mendoza, but an elderly male fairy with twinkling eyes, bent upon the performance of a benevolent mission which made his presence welcome in many a poor home, and to numbers of humble persons to most of whom he had already been a friend in need. It is probable that he had never heard of the nocturnal wanderings of a certain Haroun al Raschid, so that he could not be accused of a gross imitation of the doings of that old-time celebrity, and assuredly the famous Caliph of Bagdad never left behind him a train of deeds so sweet as that which marked the progress of Moses Mendoza through the eastern thoroughfares of the great city.

The falling night favoured his wish not to be recognised, and he strolled along bestowing his benefactions, his right hand in his pocket fingering silver coins, his left hand in the other pocket fingering sovereigns and half-sovereigns. A poorly-dressed girl approached him and looked timidly up into his face.

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'What, what, what!' he exclaimed, pinching her cheek.
'Why, it's little Esther Levy!'

'Yes, if you please, sir,' the child answered.

'Of course I please. 'Ave I got a penny? Why, 'ere's one.'

'A silver penny,' she said, looking with rapture at the half-crown. 'Oh, thank you, sir!'

'Better than a brown one, eh, Esther? 'Thirty times better.' He chuckled and pulled himself up. 'Ow's mother?'

'Ever so much better, sir.'

'Able to set up?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Shall we go and see 'er, you and me?'

'Yes, if you please, sir.'

'What shall we buy 'er? Some tea? Yes, yes, yes. And some butter? Yes, yes, yes. And 'ere's a cake shop. Per'aps we can get something she likes. And something *you* like.'

The shopkeepers did business late in that neighbourhood. Why not, indeed? If gin shops were allowed to be open till midnight, why not cake and grocer shops. So little Esther Levy had cakes to eat, and the tills of better shops than gin shops had to be opened to give Moses Mendoza in disguise change for silver and gold.

'Come along,' said the be-wigged and be-whiskered male fairy, and he and the little girl, loaded with parcels which kept falling to the ground and had to be picked up again with merry laughter, walked together to one of the narrow courts which intersect Gulstone and Middlesex Streets, the latter better known as Petticoat Lane. Entering an old tumble-down house they ascended the stairs to the top floor, where the girl slipped her hand out of his, and opening a door, cried in a glad tone,—

'Here's Mr Smith, mother!'

The woman started up with a responsive cry, as though a message from Heaven had reached her, and stretched forth her hand. Her visitor pressed her down into her chair, saying,—

‘There, there, there! Put them things on the table, Esther, and come and set on my knee. We’re going to ‘ave a little chat. Now, let’s see.’

It was with the eyes of their hearts they saw, for the light was dim; but in the darkened room the small seed of hope blossomed into flower, the leaves of which were watered with grateful tears. And when ‘Mr Smith’—pooh-poohing the whole affair, and making a hasty escape—clattered down the stairs, the invalid mother, sobbing and laughing in a breath, pressed her child to her bosom, and invoked blessings on the man who was indeed to them a ministering angel. It would, however, have confounded him to learn that in his absence they did not speak of him as ‘Mr Smith.’

What he did in that poor home was repeated in many others, and it was nearly nine o’clock before he found himself knocking at the door of a house in Wentworth Street, where he was received by a buxom woman a year or two younger than himself, who nodded a smiling welcome, and conducted him to the parlour.

He was lighter in heart and lighter in pocket, and his face was beaming. His features were unmasked now; he had removed his wig and whiskers, and he breathed more freely, and with evident relief at being rid of those encumbrances. He looked at the clock on the mantelpiece, compared the time with his watch, and sank into a chair by the table, over which the woman proceeded to lay a white cloth.

‘A minute and a ‘arf late,’ he observed.

‘Everything’s ready for you, Mr Mendoza,’ she said.

‘Do you want to spoil my supper for me, ‘Enrietta?’ he asked, shaking his finger at her.

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'That's the last thing I should wish, Mr Mendoza.'

'But you're doing of it, 'Enrietta,' he said, in a tone of mild reproof.

'How, Mr Mendoza?'

'There you are agin, you and your misters! I won't 'ave it 'Enrietta, I won't 'ave it. 'Ow many times 'ave I told you not to keep throwing your misters at my 'ead? We was boy and gal together, wasn't we? A sister couldn't be nearer than you was to me and Rebecca—God rest 'er soul!

'Poor, dear Rebecca!' murmured Mrs Woolfson, tears in her eyes.

'She was as fond of you as fond can be. You was with 'er when we was married, you was with 'er when she passed away. 'Ow time runs on, 'ow time runs on!' He paused a moment to recover himself. 'It was Mo and 'Enrietta then, wasn't it? There was no misters in them days as fur as I can remember, and I ain't going to 'ave it altered because I've got a pound or two more in my pocket than I 'ad then. I come 'ere, 'Enrietta, to enjoy myself for a hour or two, and because I ain't the sort of man to forget old times.' He stopped short and sniffed up, a broad smile spreading over his face. 'Do I smell the stewed fish, 'Enrietta?'

'I shouldn't wonder,' she replied, setting plates, knives and forks, and bread and butter on the white cloth, taking them all from a corner cupboard.

'It smells a treat,' he said, rubbing his hands joyously. 'Now, is it to be Mo and 'Enrietta as it used to be?'

'Well, then, yes, Mo—only if I do happen to forget myself now and then, don't make a fuss over it. I'll run down and make the coffee.'

'Do, do! I'm almost starving.'

She was absent a very few minutes, and brought up a pot of steaming coffee which set his nostrils quivering again

with delight. Then she cut half-a-dozen slices of white bread from a Sabbath loaf, and buttered them liberally with hard fresh butter; then she poured out a cup of coffee, and put milk and sugar in it; then she set coffee and bread and butter before him; then she left the room again, and returned with a dish filled with luscious pieces of fish lying in a bath of thick golden liquor. Mingled with the luscious pieces of fish were a number of small yellow balls. The aroma ascending from this masterpiece of delectable cookery was as the fragrance of the choicest spices of Arabia to the hungry man, whose eyes glistened as Mrs Henrietta Woolfson set the dish before him.

'There, Mr Mendoza—Mo, I mean. Help yourself.'

'Won't you join me, 'Enrietta?'

'No, thank you, Mo. I've had my supper.'

Moses Mendoza was no glutton, but it may be questioned if mortal ever enjoyed a meal so much as he did the supper which Mrs Woolfson set before him. For many years she had been in the habit of preparing the meal on such nights as he could steal away from more fashionable quarters and more fashionable tables; and it may be also questioned whether he felt so much at home anywhere as he did in that worthy woman's sitting-room. His intended visit was always announced by letter two or three days beforehand, and there was never any innovation on the established *menu*—a fresh Sabbath loaf, with the sweetest of butter, a pot of steaming coffee, and fish so deliciously stewed that she need not be ashamed—so Moses Mendoza declared—to set it before the Prince of Wales himself.

'By my life, 'Enrietta,' he said, as he laid down his knife and fork at the end of the meal, 'you ought to 'ave a medal.'

'Well, give me one,' she said good-humouredly.

'I will,' he said.

(And, as a matter of fact, he did, for on the following

day he gave an order to a goldsmith to fashion a gold brooch in the shape of a fish, with a ruby eye and a diamond tail. 'Can you think of something to engrave on the back?' he asked. The goldsmith summoned a learned assistant, who, upon being told the circumstances under which the presentation was to be made, wrote on paper, '*Quand j'ai bien mangé mon âme est gaie.*' Moses Mendoza thought a motto in French was rather a good joke. 'But how does it sound in English?' he asked. The assistant explained: 'When I have eaten well my heart is gay.' 'So it is, so it is,' said Moses Mendoza; 'you're a clever chap.' The next time he sat down at Mrs Woolfson's table he gave her the brooch, and she, in her turn, inquired what the inscription meant. 'When I eat your stewed fish,' he said, 'my 'eart bobs up and down with joy.' Upon this she remarked that she did not know he could speak French. 'Oh, didn't you?' he chuckled, and held his sides with laughter.

Supper cleared away there was a little business to transact. Mrs Woolfson was one of Moses Mendoza's almoners, commissioned to report any case of distress and poverty within her cognisance that deserved relief, and she had always in hand a sum of money to be expended in cases that required immediate attention. Her complaint against him was that he never raised objections, but gave instantly and freely. His answer to that complaint was that the people she introduced to his notice were poor. It was a claim that did not admit of argument or discussion.

'We've been poor ourselves,' Enrietta. When I think of old times it all seems like a dream. I used to be glad to make a dinner off two penn'orth of fried liver and onions, and now there's my Raphe in Parliament, married to the daughter of an earl'—he broke off. 'Ave you seen Lady Julia?'

Yes, Mrs Woolfson had seen her ladyship in a box at the

opera. She was a very beautiful lady, but she hoped he would not be offended by her saying that she looked proud and haughty. Moses Mendoza was not at all offended. Of course Lady Julia looked proud and haughty; it was in her blood. Brought up as she had been, it wasn't to be expected that she could be free and easy as they themselves were. She had to keep up her dignity.

'She's as good as gold,' he said. 'They don't make a better sort than Lady Julia, and Raphe's a 'appy man.'

'I'm sure he ought to be,' observed Mrs Woolfson. 'There's something else I'd like to say if you don't mind.'

'From you, 'Enrietta,' said Moses Mendoza, rising to go, 'anythink.'

'It's about that wig of yours, Mo.'

'What about it?' he asked in sudden alarm. 'Don't it fit?'

'Oh, it fits all right, but it don't disguise you a bit. You think people don't know who you are when you've got it on. You are mistaken. Every man, woman and child you pass know that it's Mr Moses Mendoza.'

'They do?' he exclaimed blankly.

'Yes, they do. They don't let on that they know, for the word's passed round that you don't want them to know, and they wouldn't like to offend you; you're too good a friend to them. They talk of it, though, behind your back, and some of them say you do it because you're fond of play-acting.'

'Oh, no, that ain't it. They're wrong.'

'Then what *do* you do it for?'

'Well, it's this way, 'Enrietta,' he said, speaking with a certain awkwardness. 'I've got such a lot of money I 'ardly know what to do with it. It's right that I should give a little of it away, ain't it?'

'Yes, it's right, Mo, and I'm sure it must be a satisfac-

tion to you to know that you do a lot of good. You wouldn't be sorry to hear how people speak of you.'

'I should be; I don't want to 'ear 'em. As for the good it does 'em, I get more pleasure out of it than they do, so we're more than even. But all my pleasure would be gone if they thought I give 'em a shilling or two as a sort of brag, and to show myself off.'

'Nobody could think that of you. I'd give it up, Mo.'

'You would?'

'Yes, I would. You've got nothing to be ashamed of.'

'Not that I know of, 'Enrietta.'

'And you wouldn't like to be laughed at?'

'No, I shouldn't like that.'

'Very well, then. May I have the wig?'

'Yes, you may 'ave it. After what you've told me it ain't a bit of use to me.'

He spoke rather ruefully, but the spirit of humour within him caused him to break into laughter the next minute, in which Mrs Woolfson heartily joined. He left the house, rather glad on the whole that he had acted the part of a disguised male fairy for the last time. The idea of being laughed at had settled the matter. It might have brought ridicule on Raphael and Lady Julia. 'I'm glad I'm out of it safe,' he said to himself as he strolled Spitalfields way.

CHAPTER XX

A LINK BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

DURING these nocturnal wanderings his thoughts were always reminiscent of the years during which he had lived a life of struggle in the poor neighbourhood he traversed, and he seldom left it without lingering a few moments outside the poor house in which he had resided, and in which Mr Melburn, Mr Septimus Gray's friend, had died. Every incident of that sad night was impressed upon his memory, and invariably recurred to him with singular vividness. During the intervening years great changes had been made in many of the streets round about. The glories of Petticoat Lane had departed; it had been transformed out of knowledge; most of the fried-fish shops were gone, and salmon was smoked in other chimneys; old tumble-down houses had been demolished, and immense buildings of flats for working people erected; but in his own wretched street no changes had yet been made.

There are persons who, having risen in the world, look upon the struggles of the past with feelings of revulsion, and with a kind of resentment that they should be compelled to remember; there are others, not so numerous, who make a boast of them in a spirit of self-glory; and others again to whom these old associations recur with pen-sive regret, and with a tenderness which springs rather from their own sympathetic natures than from the memories of the time that is gone. Moses Mendoza belonged to the

hastened after her. Becoming conscious of this pursuit the young woman walked faster until she almost ran. She could not, however, escape her pursuer, who, overtaking her, seized her by the arm and peered into her face.

'What do you want of me?' cried the young woman, in angry protest.

'Nothing,' said the pursuer, relaxing her grasp, and Moses Mendoza was near enough to hear her whisper to herself, 'Thank God!'

The enigma was that she had scarcely uttered these words of thanks when into her face stole again the expression of agonised anxiety.

The singular proceeding was repeated many times. There was not a female she met or who passed her that she did not accost in the same manner, and with the same result. Always that look of gratitude at not finding what she sought, always that look of agony that she had not found it.

Following and observing her, Moses Mendoza was not aware that he also was being followed and watched by a man who, as he was about to turn into a narrow street after the woman, laid a restraining hand upon his arm.

'I beg your pardon, Mr Mendoza,' the man said, 'but it isn't safe.'

'You know my name?' exclaimed Moses Mendoza, startled at being thus addressed.

'Oh, yes, sir, I know it,' replied the man, 'as everybody else does. I've seen you about this neighbourhood often, and have taken the liberty to follow you.'

'Why?'

'For your protection, sir. You're too good a sort to get knocked on the head. This is about the worst part of London for them as don't live in it; about the worst part, too, for them as does. That handsome gold chain you've got hanging across your waistcoat—which means, if it means

anything, a handsome gold watch in your waistcoat pocket—is a temptation.’ He shook his head reproachfully. ‘You shouldn’t do it, sir, you really shouldn’t. You’d have lost ’em both over and over again if I hadn’t kept my eye on you.’

‘It wouldn’t have broke me,’ said Moses Mendoza, and then, remorseful at this exhibition of ingratitude, ‘but it’s very kind of you.’ He slipped a piece of silver into the man’s hand, who slipped it into his pocket without remark. ‘I didn’t know there was any danger in a quiet walk.’

‘Danger! At this time of night every third man you meet is a thief, and every other woman probably a thief’s spy or his assistant. And you that confiding! Why, I might be a thief myself!’

‘Not being one, what are you?’

‘In the detective service, sir. Rowbottom my name.’

‘Been on duty round ’ere long, Mr Rowbottom?’

‘A matter of six months, sir. The officer whose place I took pointed you out to me. “Who do you think that is?” he asks. “Shall know if you tell me,” I answers. “That’s Mr Moses Mendoza,” he says. “He’s got more millions of sovereigns than you’ve got buttons. You’ll see him roaming the neighbourhood once or twice a month. Look after him. Sometimes he wears a wig and beard; sometimes he doesn’t.”’

Moses Mendoza pulled a long face. ‘And I thought no one ’d reco’nise me.’

‘That’s where your mistake was, sir.’

‘I wonder you didn’t take me up,’ said Moses Mendoza, laughing.

‘Nothing to wonder at, sir. We know our customers, and they know us. I’d advise you not to come roaming about here again without an escort.’

He put his hand over his mouth, looked at Moses Mendoza, looked down the street and coughed. The

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woman was no longer in sight. Moses Mendoza's eyes followed the look.

'I'm sorry I lost 'er,' he said. Mr Rowbottom coughed again, and seemed anxious to speak. 'She seemed to be in trouble,' continued Moses Mendoza, in a simple tone, 'and I was casting about in my 'ead 'ow I could 'elp 'er. What did you stop me for?'

Mr Rowbottom's countenance brightened, and he seemed to breathe more freely, in the manner of a man whose faith in human nature was restored. 'Of course that's what you followed her for, Mr Mendoza, and I ask your pardon.'

'What for, Mr Rowbottom?'

'Never mind what for, sir. It's a relief to my mind.' Moses Mendoza puzzled over the enigma, but could find no solution to it. 'I can take you to the woman, sir,' continued Mr Rowbottom, and to prove how much lighter he was in heart, made a clumsy effort to be jocose by adding, 'Though lost to sight, to memory dear. Come along o' me, sir; and as we're going into queer places do me the favour to put that gold chain into your pocket, so that it can't be caught sight of. Half the thieving that goes on in the world is brought about by temptation. Take Scripture for it—lead me not into temptation. We're a poor weak lot, Mr Mendoza. I can imagine a state of things when I wouldn't answer even for myself.' Having by this admission reached the limit of human endurance, he gravely shook his head. 'There's women's pockets—what do you think of *them* for a temptation to a poor devil? In a 'bus, or outside a draper's window, it's as good as saying, "Here you are; take what's in it." I call it nothing short of sinful.'

'What drew me to the woman we're looking for,' said Moses Mendoza, as they walked along, speaking of what was in his mind, 'was that she come out of a 'ouse I lived in when I was a younger man. Can you tell me anything about 'er?'

'Oh, yes, I've made a note of her. She comes from the country.'

'She's poor, I suppose?'

'Poor as Job.'

'She's not,' said Moses Mendoza, and hesitated—'not a bad woman, I 'ope.'

'Your feelings do you credit, sir. No, she's not a bad woman. Up to now she's respectable. What a starving woman may be driven to— But there! We won't talk about it.'

'A starving woman!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza, his heart overflowing.

'That's how it stands, if I'm not out of my reckoning. You're a rich man, sir. Perhaps you've got it in your mind to give her a helping hand.'

'I 'ave, I 'ave!'

'You're a man in a thousand, sir. As I was saying, she comes from the country. We never heard of her till she made her appearance in Spitalfields, and took the garret she lives in. My opinion is that she lodged in other parts of London before she came here. She's searching for her daughter, and fears the worst that can happen to a young woman who is alone and friendless.'

'That accounts for the way she stopped every woman she met, and looked at 'er face,' said Moses Mendoza, pityingly.

'She's been going on like that a good many weeks now. It's enough to make a man ill to think of it.'

'What part of the country does she come from?'

'She doesn't say, but from her sing-song she's Norfolk bred. From information received,' continued Mr Rowbottom, becoming judicial, 'her daughter, a young girl not out of her teens, came to London to take a situation in a draper's shop, her mother not being able to support her in the country. Things went on all right till three or four

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months ago, when the girl stopped writing. The mother wrote to her a good many times without receiving an answer. Then she wrote to the place the girl worked in and got a letter saying she had left, and they didn't know what had become of her. The mother got crazed—sold everything that belonged to her, scraped together every penny she could lay hands on, and came to London to search for her child. She's met with no success, and from all appearances is likely to go mad. She's got it into her head, you see, that the girl's gone wrong; that's why she's hunting in the worst quarters. I've had some talk with the poor creature, and from what she's told me, a bit at one time, a bit at another, I've pieced the thing together. A melancholy story, sir.'

'Dreadful—dreadful!'

'Not the only one of the kind. There's plenty of broken hearts about. We can't be too careful of our girls, sir. I've got daughters of my own, and the missis and me we keep our eyes on 'em.'

'That's right, that's right. Mr Rowbottom, we must 'elp the poor woman to find 'er child, and send 'em back to the country with a shilling or two to 'elp 'em on.'

'You're a gentleman, sir.'

'I don't set up for one. I leave that to my betters. What's that music?'

'A barrel organ. We're going in here. Stick close to me, and keep your hands out of your pockets. Don't offer money to any of the people you see.'

He knocked at the door of a house, the shutters of which denoted that it was some kind of shop.

'There's a back entrance,' he whispered, 'that the company get in by. It's safer for us to go in the front way.'

In response to the knock, a question from within was asked, and was answered by Mr Rowbottom from without. Then a slide in the door was pushed aside, and a light held up.

'Now, then,' said Mr Rowbottom, in a voice of command, 'don't keep us waiting.'

The man he spoke to, who was in his shirt sleeves, growled something in reply, and the door was opened. Mr Rowbottom grasped Moses Mendoza by the hand, and whispered a word of caution in his ear.

'Usual company inside?' said Mr Rowbottom to the man.

'What else d'yer expect to find? Who d'yer want?'

'No one in particular. We'll go in and have a look at the company.'

'Please yerself.'

'I generally do. You know me. Show the way.'

They traversed a narrow passage, lighted only by the candle the man carried, and entered a small back-yard, strewn with broken bottles and bits of old iron. At the back of this yard was a rickety flight of wooden steps without any side rail, which led them to a large room, in which were assembled thirty or forty men and women belonging to the lowest and most dangerous classes—Lascars, sailors, pickpockets, and others who do the scavenging work of the city, dregs of the gutters, blowzy women of all ages, most of them past-masters in all that is vile, and a few younger ones on the high road to that bad eminence. Upon the entrance of the visitors a man in soldier's uniform dashed out of the window, and his flight was hailed with shrieks of laughter. Mr Rowbottom noted the incident, but made no remark on it. Most of the women were bare-headed and wore flash jewellery, and there was not a man among them who would have hesitated at a deed of violence if they saw profit in it. At the end of the room was an Italian organ-grinder, with a monkey that danced and grinned at every tug of the chain. Although there were no signs of drink, not a few of the disreputable crew were tipsy, and all were ready for mischief. The absence of

bottles and glasses was evidently due to some secret signal which had warned them of the visit of the detective, and while some scowled at him and held themselves aloof, others gathered around him, and addressed him in terms of whining familiarity.

'Why, Mr Rowbottom, who'd 'ave thought of seeing you 'ere!'

'Well, now, this is a treat!'

'Why, Mr Rowbottom, the sight of you is good for sore eyes!'

'A reg'lar 'appy family, ain't we, sir? Who may you be looking for, if I may make so bold as to ask?'

'Never mind me,' said Mr Rowbottom. 'Keep your distance, and go on with your dancing. Hallo, Dick Brady! I didn't know you were out.'

'This morning,' replied a flat-featured man, with a mock exhibition of cordiality.

'How long are you going to keep out, Brady?'

'Till the next time I'm in.'

'Don't be saucy, my lad.'

'And don't you give me none of your cheek,' retorted Dick Brady, an ugly look in his eyes. 'I'm a free-born Briton, I am!'

In obedience to a general command, the organ-grinder turned the handle, and the company began to dance, some of the couples being properly assorted, others preferring to clasp the waists of their own sex. At it they went, toe and heel, double shuffle, whirling the women over their heads, singing ribald verse, exchanging coarse jokes, and screaming with laughter. The floor of the room—it was a wooden edifice, built upon piles—shook with the heavy stamping of feet, the oil lamps emitted a sickening odour, the monkey chattered and showed his gums, the blowzy women screamed louder, and snapped their fingers in the faces of the men. The only impassive figure in the scene was the

organ-grinder, whose melancholy visage was absolutely expressionless. Truly, over the door of the room in which this orgie was held should have been inscribed Dante's terrible words, 'Oh, ye who enter, leave all hope behind.'

Mr Rowbottom put a question in a low tone to the man who had opened the street door for them, and then said in a whisper to Moses Mendoza,—

'She isn't here; they shut her out. She doesn't drink, she doesn't dance, so there's no welcome for her in such a place. Most likely we shall find her at the back entrance.'

He had barely uttered the words when a woman struck a Lascar in the face. He whipped out his knife, and in a moment all the evil passions of the degraded company were let loose. Not one, but a dozen knives were out, the women cursed and swore and clawed like wild cats, the men struck indiscriminately to the right and the left. Some of the desperadoes overturned the lamps, and the room was in darkness.

Moses Mendoza's heart was in his mouth. Mr Rowbottom's grasp of his hand tightened, and he felt himself dragged out and down the flight of rickety steps, and before he knew where he was he found himself outside the hell of evil passions.

'Got your breath, Mr Mendoza?' Mr Rowbottom asked.

'Ardly,' replied Moses Mendoza, wiping his forehead.

'Lucky we got out of it without a knife sticking in us,' observed Mr Rowbottom. 'It's my belief they put out the lights for the purpose of getting at us. I shall have a word or two to say to some of them to-morrow.' He clutched his companion's shoulder. 'There she is.'

He pointed to the woman they were looking for. She was standing near the door, in such a position that she could see the faces of those who went in and out. As they moved towards her there was a rush of the savage combatants from the house, and the woman was knocked down

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and trampled upon. She uttered one cry, and then lay still. The detective raised her in his arms.

‘Follow me—quick!’

They ran fast, and were soon in the wider and safer thoroughfare. There they paused a moment, and Moses Mendoza and Mr Rowbottom looked at the white face of the woman.

‘Is she badly ’urt?’ asked Moses Mendoza, trembling in every limb.

‘It hasn’t done her any good. The best thing we can do is to take her to her lodging.’

‘Yes, yes. Can I ’elp you carry ’er?’

‘Not much help needed. She’s nothing but skin and bone.’

They hurried on, and in a few minutes reached the house. As he ascended the stairs, Moses Mendoza felt as if he had been suddenly plunged back into the old time when Mr Melburn lay dying on such a night as this, and at about the same hour.

‘Have you got any matches about you?’ asked Mr Rowbottom.

‘Yes.’

‘Give us a light up the stairs.’

Moses Mendoza went first, and on the topmost landing opened the door of the garret. An inch or two of tallow candle was stuck in a bottle, and he lighted it, and then Mr Rowbottom laid the insensible woman upon a ragged straw mattress on the floor. There was one thin counterpane to this wretched bed.

‘Is she dead?’ whispered Moses Mendoza. ‘For the love of God don’t tell me she’s dead!’

‘A moment, Mr Mendoza.’ Moses Mendoza waited in an agony of suspense. Mr Rowbottom raised his head. ‘No, she lives, and I don’t think any bones are broken; but a doctor had better see her at once. Will you remain here while I fetch one?’

'Yes. Go—go at once, and be back quick. And look 'ere, Mr Rowbottom. Tell 'im he'll be paid liberal. I pay for everything. 'Ere!' He thrust all the money he had into the officer's hand.

'Very good, sir. Pity there ain't more of your sort in the world,' said Mr Rowbottom, and hastened from the house.

Alone with the insensible woman, Moses Mendoza gazed around in a kind of bewilderment. The scenes he had witnessed, his being once more in the room in which Raphael's friend had died, and in which perhaps this poor woman was dying, the memories which had been conjured up during the last two hours, formed altogether a wild phantasmagoria which was more like a disturbed dream than actual reality. The bed upon which Mr Melburn had drawn his last breath was gone, but the few poor articles of furniture in the apartment seemed to be familiar to him. They had reached their last stage. The two chairs were bottomless, and as he moved one a leg slipped away and the chair toppled over. Had the sound aroused the woman? No, she lay on the worn-out mattress quite still, and but for the light breathing he felt as he knelt and put his ear to her mouth, her troubles in this world might really be over. He recollected that when Mr Melburn was dead he had placed his ear to the lifeless body just as he was doing now. He rose to his feet with a shudder.

The most persistent reminiscences that presented themselves were those which related to Mr Melburn. He recalled the words which the ruined man had spoken with respect to Raphael. He was the first to say that the lad had in him the makings of a scholar and a gentleman. This prophetic statement alone would have caused Moses Mendoza to think of him with tenderness. He thought of the last words murmured by Mr Melburn as life was ebbing away—'Why grind so hard, dear lad? It is a lovely

evening. Come out on the river.' A vision was conjured up of a shining river, and the two friends, Mr Melburn and Mr Septimus Gray, sitting together in a boat. Once, when Raphael was at Oxford, he had stolen down and watched his own dear lad rowing on the shining river. Raphael was not aware that his father's eyes were on him. Moses Mendoza returned to London a happy man.

The sound of footsteps on the stairs sent him into the passage, in the hope that it announced the arrival of Mr Rowbottom and the doctor. The sound ceased on the lower landing, and proceeded from another lodger in the house. Moses Mendoza stood in the passage, waiting, and presently he heard the sound of other footsteps. The street doors of many of the houses in the neighbourhood remained unlocked throughout the night for the convenience of the lodgers, who came and went at all hours. It was no person's business to keep the doors locked, and there was nothing in the houses to tempt burglars. Poverty has the doubtful advantage that it cannot be robbed.

It was a great relief to Moses Mendoza when Mr Rowbottom, accompanied by a doctor, entered the room. A brief examination of the woman was sufficient to enable the doctor to state that the injuries she had received from the assault were slight.

'She will recover her senses presently,' he said, moistening her parched lips with water, and pouring a few drops of the brandy he had brought with him into her mouth. 'She is suffering more from hunger than anything else.'

'Hunger!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza.

'I should say,' continued the doctor, 'that for some little while past she has scarcely had sufficient food to keep body and soul together.'

'We can remedy that,' said Mr Rowbottom, cheerfully. Moses Mendoza nodded several times. 'If she has nourishing food, doctor, will she recover her strength?'

'I cannot possibly vouch for that,' replied the doctor. 'It is largely a matter of nerves, and much depends upon getting them into a calmer state. There is some mental trouble. Let her be relieved of that, and there is hope for her. I have done all I can at present; in the morning I will send some medicine. See—she is breathing more freely; she opens her eyes.'

The suffering woman looked from one to another, then her eyes closed, and she seemed to sleep—the sleep of exhaustion.

'She can't be left alone,' said Moses Mendoza, when the doctor had departed. 'You 'ave to attend to your duties. Can you get some kind woman to look after 'er?'

Mr Rowbottom considered a moment.

'A trained nurse would be the proper person.'

'Of course it would.'

'I know where to lay my hands on one. She couldn't be got here in less than an hour.'

'I'll wait till she comes.'

'The poor creature should be removed to a healthier place than this. It's a mystery how people live in these holes. It wouldn't cost a great deal.'

'What does it matter what it costs? You talk as if money was an object.'

'It is to most of us,' said Mr Rowbottom, smiling.

'It ain't to me. I should be more than obliged if you'll 'elp me.'

'I'll do what I can with pleasure. I'll be back as soon as possible.'

'Don't walk, Mr Rowbottom. Take cabs, and pay the men well. I ain't got any more money upon me just now—'

'You've given me more than I can spend to-night. I'm off.'

Before the arrival of the nurse Moses Mendoza found the

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link which united the present with the past, and was destined to lay bare the base heart of the man who would have wrecked the happiness of his beloved son.

The woman opened her eyes, and passed her hand confusedly over her brow ; then closed and opened them again.

‘Who are you?’

‘You won’t know my name. It is Mendoza. I am a friend.’

‘A friend! Have I any? What has happened to me? How did I come here?’

‘It’s where you lodge, ain’t it?’

‘Yes, yes!’

‘Mr Rowbottom and me brought you ’ome. He is an officer on duty in the neighbourhood. You’ve spoken to him about your daughter.’

‘Ah—my daughter—my dear, dear child! Where is she?’

‘We’re going to find ’er for you.’

‘To find her! Oh, can you?’

‘We’ll try our ’ardest. You’ve been looking for ’er a long time.’

‘A long, long time! Oh, my heart, my heart!’

‘Don’t worry yourself more than you can ’elp. We’re going to take care of you. Mr Rowbottom’s gone to fetch a nurse, and to-morrow you shall be moved to a nicer room than this.’

‘It’s like a dream!’ she murmured, looking at him in wonder.

‘It ain’t a dream, my dear’—the woman gasped, and shrank from him; he moved a little away—‘I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon—it’s a bad ’abit I’ve got, but I don’t mean you a bit of ’arm. I’m an old man—you may trust me. I’ve got a son of my own, married to the sweetest lady! I’ll go and wait outside if you like till the nurse comes.’

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The ring of genuine kindness and honesty in his voice reassured her ; she looked wistfully at him, and he returned her look and nodded kindly ; but he moved no nearer to her.

‘But why do you do this for me?’ she asked, and repeated in a tone of abasement, ‘For me!’

‘I lived in this ’ouse once myself ; a friend of mine lived in this very room’—he was about to add, ‘and died ’ere,’ but checked himself. ‘I ’ad rooms downstairs. I was poor then ; now I’m rich. I don’t say it as a boast, only to show you that I’m able to ’elp you if you’ll let me.’

‘How good it is of you ! I can only thank you. Oh, sir, if you can—if you can, I shall bless you all the days of my life. But if you heard my story you might not care to help me—and I am ashamed to tell it—’

‘Tell me what you like, but let it be the truth. I have promised that we will find your daughter for you, and we will. Only we must know where to commence.’

‘You would not deceive me—you would not play with a mother’s feelings—’

‘God forbid !’ said Mendoza.

‘I will tell you all. For pity’s sake, don’t look at me ! I have tried to hide my shame, and now it rises from the grave. I was well brought up, and had a situation as a school teacher. There was a man—a gentleman—I was taking a holiday—I cannot go on, I cannot ! Oh, if my dear child has been deceived, as I was, my heart will break, my heart will break !’

‘Don’t give way. I understand you—I pity you. What is your name—where do you come from ? Why did your child leave you ?’

‘It was such a hard struggle to live ! I could not afford to keep her. There was no employment for her where we lived, and a friend got a situation for her in London. It was a bitter trial that she had to go so far away from me,

but there was no help for it. We had to part—or starve !
I come from Holt, in Norfolk.'

'Holt ! Norfolk !' exclaimed Moses Mendoza.

'Yes, sir. My name is Mayfield—'

'Stop !' he cried, in an agitated tone.

This strange revelation brought to his mind Mr Melburn's confession many long years ago. She came from Holt, in Norfolk. Her name was Ellen Mayfield. For a moment or two he was dazed.

'Have I said anything wrong, sir ?' she asked, fearing that she had offended him.

'No—no ! But I know you—I have heard your name. It is Ellen. It was told me in this room sixteen years ago.'

'By whom ?' she cried, sitting upright, a wild look in her eyes.

'By the gentleman who deserted you,' replied Moses Mendoza, and his voice was very gentle, 'by Mr Melburn'—he timidly added, 'the father of your child.'

Her convulsive sobs were a sufficient answer, and he did not speak again till she was calmer. Then he said,—

'He was the friend I mentioned who lived in this room.'

'Can you tell me something more of him, sir ?'

'Are you strong enough to 'ear it ?' asked Mósés Mendoza, tender sympathy in his voice.

'Yes. Tell me—tell me !'

'He is dead.'

'Dead ! My child's father dead ! Is it the hand of fate that has led me here ?'

'It's the 'and of 'Eaven, I 'ope. I was with 'im. He spoke beautifully of you, and was very, very sorry.'

'Oh, if I had known—if I had known !'

'He would 'ave been glad to 'ear that you forgave 'im.'

'I do—I do !'

'Almost the last words he spoke was of you. He asked me to 'elp you if I ever come across you. Will you trust me ?'

'Oh, yes—yes!'

'Thank you. Don't lose 'eart. When we find your daughter you'll be 'appy agin. Why, 'ere's the nurse. I'm glad you're back, Mr Rowbottom. We're ever so much better, ain't we, Mrs Mayfield? 'Ow do you do, nurse? 'Ere's my card. You ain't to spare no expense, mind.'

'I understand, sir. Mr Rowbottom has explained everything.'

'Then we'll leave you together. I'll come and see you to-morrow. Good-night. Good-night, Mrs Mayfield. You must get well quick. She looks brighter already, don't she? Shall we get along, Mr Rowbottom?'

When they were in the open, Moses Mendoza related to Mr Rowbottom all that he deemed necessary respecting Ellen Mayfield's history, and instructed him to take every possible step towards the recovery of her child.

That done, he went home to bed.

He had had an exciting and exhausting day, and its strange incidents and discoveries were reproduced in his dreams in fantastic fashion. But he slept well notwithstanding, and rose in the morning as bright and alert and genial as he had ever been in his life. It suited him to have plenty to do, and what with these private affairs and the Lynwood Forest Mining Company he certainly had his hands full just now.

Panel the Third.—Raphael Mendoza and his Wife, Lady Julia

CHAPTER XXI

FROM SUMMER TO AUTUMN

THREE months have passed, and we are now in the autumn of the year. Holiday-time for those who can afford it has come and gone, and people who have rushed from London to the country and the Continent are returning to their homes. The Stock Exchange has shaken off its apathy, and bears and bulls are scheming and fighting their battles over again; fashionable women are discussing a daring innovation in the cut of their gowns, the example for which has been set by a celebrated actress whose histrionic talent lies in her costumes (and in nothing else); the air is full of startling rumours; a war has broken out which may change the destinies of nations; the heir to the Throne has a favourite for the Leger; a facetious journal, reviewing these seething elements, declares that 'the pot is boiling.' There has been no rest, however, for the actors in this drama of human life and passion. Worthy endeavour and base intrigue have not for one moment slept. In the light of the summer sun and the dim watches of the night the persons in whom we are interested have been pursuing their aims, and steadily marching towards the goal they wish to reach.

Raphael Mendoza's position in the political world was established. He had electrified the House by a speech on the National Defence, so stirring, so full of fire, so eloquent and convincing in its denunciation of existing systems that old Parliamentary hands recognised the advent of a new power in their ranks, and if they had been asked which man among them was most likely to rise to eminence they would have pointed unhesitatingly to the son of Moses Mendoza.

For the millionaire there had been no fashionable holiday, nor did he sigh for one. London was his pleasure-ground, and it would have made him positively unhappy to leave it. He did not shoot, he did not entertain, he took no interest in racing matters, he was never to be seen at fashionable supper parties in the West-End hotels. He was not even a Club man. To all the suggestions that he should allow his name to be put down as a candidate for membership in such or such a club he gave an emphatic refusal.

'What! Let 'em shy black balls at Moses Mendoza! Not good enough, not good enough. Besides, what do I want of clubs? I should be like a fish out of water if I set my foot inside 'em.'

He had another and a more cogent reason. He would not afford the free lances of the press an opportunity to lampoon the name of Mendoza. It was his son's name.

'I ain't going to give 'em a chance to be nasty,' he said.

Bound together privately by the most loving ties, he and Raphael seemed to live a life apart. He knew that his personality was a drawback to the rising statesman, and he kept himself as much as possible in the background. There was no change in the attitude of Lady Julia towards him. Her aversion to his society was indeed accentuated, and had rather gathered strength than otherwise. In his behaviour to her it was not apparent that he was aware of

this antipathy. It may be that he was, and that, in his own modest estimate of himself, he found justification for her conduct. To others it was clear, for she was at no trouble to disguise it.

Mr Vivian St Maur did not shine as a private secretary. Such duties as Raphael first entrusted to him—duties of a light nature that would not have occupied two hours out of the twenty-four—were so neglected or ill-performed that he ceased to trouble him ; paid him his salary, and allowed him to idle away his time. This suited the young *roué* ; to be paid for doing nothing was what he believed himself entitled to. Nevertheless, every cheque that was given him was accepted as a humiliation, and embittered him the more.

His relations with Lady Julia underwent no change. She listened to the temptations he held out, and, while excusing him for what she believed to be a sincere devotion, did not yield to them. There was, indeed, in her proud spirit an undercurrent of honourable and womanly feeling which up to the present had saved her from the abyss. But she was in danger. It is said that the woman who hesitates is lost. It was not so with her. Holding the name of Lynwood above every other consideration, she had not yet reached the point of bringing dishonour upon it.

With the tempter it was different. To him nothing was sacred, least of all the honour and purity of the women who had the misfortune to come into association with him. There are men so base as to be incapable of thinking of a woman with respect and decency. She is a creature for a man's sport, for the gratification of sensual passion, a light of love to be toyed with and thrown aside without regard to consequences. To this man it was a vice in the blood which he indulged in without restraint. Opposition did not inflame him, for he was incapable of strong feeling ; it impelled him to a cooler contemplation of obstacles and a stronger determination to overcome them.

There was a special reason for his insidious pursuit of Julia. He was deeply in debt. Julia was rich, and at any moment could furnish herself and him with means for some years of ease and pleasure. Not in England. There were countries in Europe where he could enjoy himself if he had a full purse. Thus Julia was to be the means to an end. He gave no thought to the shame and disgrace attendant upon such a flight, nor to what would become of her when he had beggared her. That was no concern of his. He had already on various occasions appealed to her for assistance to relieve him from pressing debts, and had never been refused. In the aggregate he had obtained from her a considerable sum of money, and that he asked her for hundreds instead of thousands was due to the fear that the request might frighten her and arouse her suspicions. He had also 'bled' the man he hated, approaching the subject with cautious indifference, in order that he might beat a retreat in the event of its being received with disfavour.

But Moses Mendoza met him half-way.

'I daresay, now,' said the financier, 'that a cheque for a couple of 'undred wouldn't come amiss?'

'To tell you the truth, Mr Mendoza,' replied St Maur, 'I should have no objection to it.'

'Of course not, of course not. I don't know the man who would. It's very good of you to come to me.'

'I haven't come to you,' said St Maur, loftily.

'Oh, well,' said Moses Mendoza, closing his cheque-book, 'I don't want to offend you.'

Vivian St Maur laughed awkwardly, and inwardly cursed himself for bungling the matter. 'I don't mean that it wouldn't be a convenience,' he said.

'Oh, if you put it in that way,' said Moses Mendoza, genially, writing the cheque, 'here you are. You're Lady Julia's cousin, and you're quite welcome.'

'I shouldn't like her to know,' said St Maur.

'Bless your 'eart, I sha'n't tell 'er.'

'What's the interest, Mr Mendoza? I've no objection to fifty or sixty per cent. I believe that's the usual charge.'

'Do you, now?' said Moses Mendoza, darting a keen look at him. 'I call that generous of you. But if that's 'ow you look at it, I'd better stop the cheque. Because you see, Mr St Maur, I ain't a money-lender. I don't give you the cheque in a business way, but because we're both—you and me, you know—connected with the Lynwood family. We're on an equal footing, so to speak. You take the couple of 'undred from me as a friend. Shall I stop the cheque?'

'No, I wouldn't do that,' said St Maur, endeavouring to speak with unconcern. 'I'm sorry if I've hurt your feelings.'

'Per'aps you thought I 'adn't any. Never mind; I accept your apology. You're welcome to the money. Good-morning, Mr St Maur.'

Vivian left the office, writhing. He would have liked to fling the cheque into Moses Mendoza's face, but he had a debt of honour which must be paid, so he was compelled to pocket the humiliation.

His pecuniary embarrassments sprang from his gambling habits—cards, billiards, racing, speculations on the Stock Exchange, and these latter had, until quite lately, been uniformly disastrous. Nothing that he touched prospered. Even under more favourable circumstances his Stock Exchange transactions might have resulted in loss, for the fate of the gambler whose brain is not evenly balanced is proverbial; but his indirect connection with so successful a speculator as Moses Mendoza rendered his failure doubly strange. Although the millionaire had no genuine liking for St Maur, he never refused to enlighten him as to the probable course of such and such a stock. But this, as it happened, was a disadvantage to him. So strong was his hatred of the Mendozas, and so vindictively eager was

he to witness their downfall, that his feelings impelled him to speculate in the opposite direction to that which he had been advised to take. When he was told that one of Moses Mendoza's stocks would rise he speculated for a fall, when that a stock would fall he speculated for a rise. The consequences may be easily guessed.

His relations with Mr Carpe's daughter Gertrude were not the least of his perplexities. Mr Carpe had for some time acted as his agent in his transactions ; he had become a regular visitor in Mr Carpe's home, and in an unguarded moment he had proposed to the girl. His offer was accepted, and they were engaged, but upon some invented pretext of his expectations both father and daughter had consented to keep the engagement a secret for the present. Mr Carpe at first objected, but he was ruled entirely by Gertrude, for whom he entertained an absorbing love, and he yielded to her solicitations. He kept careful guard and watch upon his child, whose principles would have been a sufficient protection against the wiles of the unscrupulous lover. As time went on he grew to suspect the integrity and honesty of the wooer, but Gertrude, deeply in love with Vivian, had no suspicion, and he saw that to instil a doubt into her mind would have made her unhappy. Therefore he was silent, and contented himself by redoubling his watch upon the young man. He himself was a speculator, and strangely enough, though he entertained no resentment against Moses Mendoza, he was led to believe, partly by Vivian's specious arguments, that the long run of luck would be broken, and that a crash must take place. In this way it was that these two men came to conduct their operations on the Stock Exchange on the same lines, and that Mr Carpe shared Vivian's losses. Having some private means of his own, and being in the enjoyment of a liberal salary, he was enabled to assist Vivian ; but he was becoming alarmed at the young man's

indebtedness to him, and, not for the first time, he spoke to him on the subject. For several weeks the five-pound shares of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company were quoted at three pounds premium, and were largely dealt in. At Vivian's request Mr Carpe had sold five hundred of these shares, and on settling day they were at a premium of three and a half—a loss, with broker's charges, of some three hundred pounds.

'What is to be done?' asked Mr Carpe.

'Add it on to the account,' said Vivian, shrugging his shoulders.

'You speak lightly, Mr St Maur. The account is very large, and I am not exactly a millionaire.'

'I wish you were, for my sake.'

'I wish I were for my own—and Gertrude's. For myself the modest loaf with a modicum of butter would suffice; but I wish something better for my child.'

'So do I, Mr Carpe.'

'Yes,' said Mr Carpe, with a wary look at Vivian; 'it would be better for both of you. I have no desire to press you, considering the relations which will presently exist between us.'

'Presently?'

'Presently. Is it not time that the engagement between you and Gertrude was made known to our friends?'

'Surely that is a matter which Gertrude and I can settle for ourselves,' replied Vivian, fretfully, 'without the intervention of a third party.'

'I being the third party?'

'Are you not?'

'In a certain sense; but at the same time I am her father.'

'Oh, don't worry me. I will speak to Gertrude about it.'

'Yes, do. You will understand, Mr St Maur, that she has made no complaint.'

'I should think not. What has she got to complain of?'

'I rely upon your speaking to her upon the subject at as early a date as possible. Do you promise?'

'Of course I do. And you will see about this little monetary affair?'

'I must, I suppose, for Gertrude's sake. To return to the Lynwood Forest Company. Would it not be advisable, if you insist upon continuing to speculate—'

'I must continue. There is no other way of recovering my losses. The cursed luck must change—it must!'

'Would it not be advisable, I was about to say, to change your tactics?'

'In what way?' asked Vivian, gloomily.

'By floating with the stream. I throw it out as a suggestion—merely as a suggestion.'

'Don't be mysterious. Speak plainly.'

'I will. I hear it whispered that the shares must continue to rise. It would, therefore, be suicidal to bear them. Why not throw in your lot with the bulls?'

'Do you advise me to do so?'

'I don't advise. I suggest.'

'What do you intend to do yourself?'

'Now, now, Mr St Maur, it is hardly fair to ask me the question.'

'Not fair! Are you not Gertrude's father?'

'When you appeal to me in her name you have me at your mercy. Well, then I advise. Having the welfare of my child so close to my heart I may even buy a few shares myself in the expectation of a rise. I shall not go out of my depth. I shall merely dabble—dabble.'

'I understand.'

There had been as yet no substantial result from the mines. Eminent mining engineers had been engaged, and armies of men set to work in the forest. At the statutory meeting of shareholders held a few weeks after the flotation

of the company the engineers' reports were read to beaming investors. There was nothing extravagant in them, but the moderation of the language in which the reports were couched was held as a most encouraging sign. The *quidnuncs* quoted other companies which had been floated by Moses Mendoza on the same lines; no extravagant promises made, but grand results achieved.

'It will be the same with the Lynwood Forest Mining Company,' they said.

As a matter of fact less reliance was placed upon the reports of experts than upon the reputation borne by Moses Mendoza for shrewdness and sagacity. It was known that the greater part of his fortune was invested in the company, and that the moment there was a sign of decline in the market his brokers were busy purchasing every available share in the market. Thus every attempt made by bears to depress the market ended in loss to themselves and in profit to those who, as Mr Carpe expressed it, floated with the stream.

At the time Carpe and Vivian St Maur had their conversation the shares were at a premium of three and a half. Both of them purchased at this figure, and could have sold shortly afterwards at a good profit, for the shares continued to rise. Instead of selling, they made further purchases, and still the shares continued to rise. Had they realised at the right moment, they could have retrieved their losses and had a substantial balance to their credit, but it is in the nature of such men not to be satisfied with moderate or even liberal gains; their appetites grow by what they feed upon; visions of great fortunes dazzle them, and they turn a deaf ear to the whispers of prudence. They bought first at three and a half premium; subsequently at five; subsequently again at six, seven and eight. The average price they paid for their five-pound shares was a little over ten pounds, and they could have sold out at thirteen pounds;

but they still held on, and continued to buy at the highest figure. The question of a public announcement of the engagement between Vivian St Maur and Gertrude Carpe was still in abeyance. He had not broached the subject to her, and she, with full trust and confidence in him, was quite content to bide his pleasure.

There was nothing to justify the price at which the shares of the great company stood in the market; it was simply a blind following of Moses Mendoza's luck. Meanwhile the work in the forest was progressing famously; thousands of men were working day and night, and quite a colony had settled in the immediate neighbourhood. Houses for the workpeople were being built, trade was flourishing, everyone was jubilant. Fashionable ladies made pilgrimages to the forest, entered into conversation with the labourers, inspected the cottages, poked with their parasols and umbrellas among the earth that was being dug up, and came away full of enthusiasm. But no discoveries of distinct value had been made. This was not exactly a disappointment, and no one was discouraged, for it was anticipated by the mining engineers and all connected with the enterprise that the shafts would have to be sunk a considerable depth before they came upon the ore in paying quantities. Their statement that all the indications were favourable was sufficient.

Suddenly, however, a note of warning was sounded. How it came about, or who was responsible for it, not a person could say, but it was in the air, and was the signal for others. Here was a chance for the croakers, and they took advantage of it. Investors looked askant upon one another; Moses Mendoza was questioned, and as usual his reply was a smile. The shares fell from thirteen to twelve, rallied a little, even rose to thirteen and a half, and fell back again to twelve. The following day there was a drop to eleven, and timid investors gave instructions to their

brokers to sell ; but upon reports that Moses Mendoza was purchasing every share that was offered, there was another inspiring rally.

‘Moses Mendoza is working this himself.’ ‘He’s up to some dodge.’ ‘What is his little game?’ ‘He knows something wonderful about the mines, and is keeping it back.’ ‘If you think you’re going to take a rise out of old Mo, you’ll find yourself mistaken.’ ‘What ! Catch Mo Mendoza on the hip ! You’re out of your senses. He can buy and sell you a dozen times a day !’

Thus ran the comments.

But nothing completely restored confidence. The shares fluttered, up a half, down a half, still keeping at about eleven ; and people continued to ask what was the meaning of it. A question which no one could answer. The whole affair was a mystery.

By the end of the week the shares had dropped to ten, and Moses Mendoza was still buying. On Monday morning they opened at nine and a half, and the market closed at nine. There was something like a panic, and brokers were overwhelmed with orders to sell.

In the midst of all this excitement the one undisturbed person was Moses Mendoza. He joked and chuckled as usual, and bustled about in the most cheerful spirit. In his presence people were inspired with confidence ; in his absence they lost it.

Vivian St Maur and Mr Carpe were at their wits’ ends. They held a considerable number of shares, and they could only realise at a great loss. In this emergency their relations became strained to a greater extent than usual ; they exchanged reproaches ; each mistrusted the other.

This was the position of affairs on the day when an important function was to take place in Moses Mendoza’s honour, which had kept a number of worthy people busy for the last three or four weeks.

CHAPTER XXII

MOSES MENDOZA EXULTS

THE principal living room in Moses Mendoza's private house could boast of very few purely domestic appurtenances. It was, indeed, an office in which much business was gone through and mapped out. There was a large writing table for Mr Carpe and a smaller one for himself, and the furniture was of a plain and solid character. The principal articles of furniture were the writing tables and a dozen or so comfortable armchairs, upholstered in morocco leather; a safe was built into the wall, and the business character of the apartment was completely established by a telephone and a tape machine, the clicking of which was almost a part of Moses Mendoza's life. On the walls were three portraits, those of himself and Lady Julia which had been exhibited in the Royal Academy, and another of his son Raphael. Lady Julia's feelings with respect to her portrait had become known to Raphael, and when she told him that she would prefer not to have it in her house, he presented it to his father, unaware that she would consider this an additional insult. Conspicuous in the apartment were two fine marble busts of Gladstone and D'Israeli, their contiguity denoting the impartial view which their owner took of politics.

At the present moment Mr Carpe was sitting at his writing table, which was a perfect litter of documents and newspapers, and Moses Mendoza was reclining in an arm-

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chair, listening to his secretary, who was reading aloud the leading articles upon an eventful debate which had taken place in the House of Commons last evening. A question affecting the National Defence had been under discussion, upon the issue of which the existence of the present Government depended. It had been moved by Raphael in an eloquent and convincing speech, and when, at the end of two hours, he resumed his seat, congratulations poured upon him from all sides. The debate had been adjourned, and was to be finished to-night, when the division would take place.

Moses Mendoza's presence being indispensable at the approaching function in his honour, he was not to be seen this morning in his City office. The excitement with regard to the Lynwood Forest Mining Company was at its height; but it was of less importance to him than the articles which Mr Carpe was reading. From time to time both employer and secretary consulted the tape which recorded the doings on the Stock Exchange, Mr Carpe with anxiety, Moses Mendoza with apparent indifference to the momentous issues which these doings had upon his fortunes. On the Stock Exchange his absence was generally construed to his disadvantage. 'Afraid to show his face,' said some. 'He has feathered his nest,' said others, 'and if there's a smash-up he will not be the sufferer.'

Mr Carpe laid down the newspaper from which he had been reading.

'Grand—grand—grand!' chuckled Moses Mendoza. 'That's what *The Times* says, Carpe?'

'That's what *The Times* says, Mr Mendoza.'

'A great paper, Carpe. Generally says what comes to pass, don't it?'

'As a rule, sir, it has its finger on the public pulse. But it is not always right.'

'Of course not, of course not. 'Tain't to be expected

that we can always be right. But it's right in this case, eh?'

'It seems to voice the general opinion, sir.'

'Ha, ha, ha! My boy Raphe's made a 'it—he's made a 'it, Carpe.'

'There appears to be little doubt of it,' said Mr Carpe, looking through another paper.

'Ha, ha, ha! He 'asn't been long over it. They don't often 'ear a speech like that. When I set in the gallery I said to myself, "Where does he get it from?" But when he got into the 'Ouse I knew 'ow it would be. Read some more, Carpe, read some more.'

Mr Carpe read a highly eulogistic article on the speech, which ended with,—

'There is as little doubt that the Vote of Censure will be carried to-night as there is that the defeat of the Ministry will be mainly due to the masterly indictment of the Member for Birchester.'

'Raphael Mendoza, Esq., M.P. for Birchester,' said Moses Mendoza, proudly. ''Ain't lost no time, 'as he? He's marched straight on.'

'A remarkably rapid stride, sir. In point of fact, I should call it unique.'

'U what, Carpe?' asked Moses Mendoza, a puzzled look on his face.

'Unique, sir,' replied Mr Carpe, concealing a smile.

'Now, what does that stand for in the dictionary? I ain't quite up to them dictionary words, you know.'

'I know, sir. It stands for unparalleled, unprecedented.'

'Oh, unprece— never mind, never mind. You've got another paper in your 'and. What does that say?'

Mr Carpe read on to an accompaniment of exultant chuckles.

'Before his stirring speech the issue was in the balance. It was a trumpet call, and rang out clear and true, and when

he sat down amid the ringing cheers of the Opposition, the fate of the Ministry was a foregone conclusion.'

'Four 'ow many, Carpe?'

'Meaning, sir, that the Ministry would be certain to be overthrown. Here is another article, headed "A Fool's Paradise," in which the same note is struck, and emphasising Mr Raphael's striking warning about the weakness of our Channel Fleet for the efficient protection of our shores. There seems to be but one opinion. Even the Ministerial organs admit the defeat of the Government, and say—he paused to turn over some papers—'and say—'

'Say what—say what?' cried Moses Mendoza, impatiently. 'Don't be so slow!'

'That your son must be a member of the new Ministry to assist in the necessary measures to be taken. I congratulate you, sir.'

'Thank you, thank you. I—I can 'ardly set down.' He rose and paced the apartment.

'I don't wonder at it, sir. It is an alluring vista.'

'Is it?' said Moses Mendoza, greatly perplexed at the word. 'I suppose it is.' To himself he murmured, 'I wish he wouldn't use them words. No sense in 'em. Why can't he speak plain English?' He pulled out a large cigar-case. 'Ave a cigar, Carpe.'

'You are very kind, sir. I don't smoke myself, but I'll take one for a friend who knows a good cigar when he sees it.'

'He won't get better than these nowhere. Take two while you're about it. The way to get along in the world, Carpe, is never to miss a chance.'

'You never do, sir.'

'Shouldn't be where I am if I did.'

'Since you are so persuasive, sir,' said Mr Carpe, fingering the cigars. 'Dear me! Three!'

'Stick to 'em,' said Moses Mendoza, laughing. 'Plenty

more where they come from. Cost ten pound a 'undred, two shillings a-piece. Ha, ha, ha! I remember the time when I was glad to smoke a penny Pickwick.'

'But now, sir?'

'Now, Carpe, the best of everythink's good enough for Moses Mendoza. I've got the money to pay for it. Not that I want to crow. I ain't proud, I 'ope.'

'No one can accuse Mr Moses Mendoza of pride.'

'No, no. What have I got to be proud of—egscept my boy Raphe? Not many sons like 'im—not many, not many.' He paced the room in restless exultation, and spoke to himself disjointedly. 'My boy Raphe in the Ministry—Colonial Secretary—Chancellor of the Egschequer—Ha, ha, ha!' He stopped, and gazed admiringly at the busts of Gladstone and D'Israeli.

Mr Carpe stepped to the tape machine, and ran the tape through his fingers. 'The shares are still going down, sir.'

'Let 'em—let 'em—let 'em! Who cares? They'll come up again. Foreign Secretary—Prime Minister!'— He was lost in his dreams.

'Lynwood Forest Mining Company, seven, seven and a quarter,' soliloquised Mr Carpe, reading the tape. He turned to Moses Mendoza. 'A drop of three quarters since eleven o'clock. You are the largest shareholder, sir.'

'Yes—me and the earl between us 'old 'arf the shares—more than 'arf.'

'Can nothing be done, sir?'

'Ow—what?'

'To send them up again?'

'What would you advise, Carpe?' asked Moses Mendoza, in a bantering tone.

'It is difficult, sir; but I hope you will not give your brokers orders to sell,' said Mr Carpe, knowing that such a step would mean the ruin of his own fortunes.

'Orders to sell!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza, 'What! And drop straight into the jaws of the bears! D'you think I've lost my senses? I see 'em dancing. "Ha, ha, ha!" they cry. "We've got the whip 'and of old Moses now! We'll down 'im—we'll down 'im!" That's what they'd say to each other. Sell? Not me! I've been there myself, Carpe.'

'You made a pretty penny by it, sir.'

'Yes, made a bit—made a bit.' He began to dream again. 'My boy Prime Minister of England! Received by the Queen—sleeping at Windsor—made a baronite—"Rise, Sir Raphael Mendoza, M.P. for Birchester." Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!'

Mr Carpe left the tape, and reseating himself at the table, proceeded to open a number of letters. 'You don't forget, sir, that the deputation from the Patriotic League will be here at twelve.'

'Wish it was over—wish it was over,' said Moses Mendoza, in a tone of distress.

'It is a great occasion, sir.'

'Rubbish—rubbish! What do they want coming 'ere to bother me for? Nobody arsked 'em.'

'Your munificent gift of the battleship to the nation, sir—'

'Yes, yes—but why can't they let me alone? I'd give 'em another if they'd let me alone! Shall I 'ave to do anythink?'

'You will have to acknowledge the vote of thanks, sir.'

'What do you mean? Make a speech?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Not me, Carpe, not for a thousand pounds! I think I see myself! Old Moses Mendoza making a speech to a lot of patriots! A pretty 'ow d'ye do that 'd be. It's rich, that's what it is—it's rich.'

'It's the usual thing, sir.'

'I don't care—I ain't going to do it—I couldn't, Carpe, to save my life!'

'It's one of the penalties of greatness.'

'Don't talk to me of greatness,' said Moses Mendoza, violently. 'I won't 'ave it! The patriots want to 'ear theirselves talk, that's what they want. Well, I'll let them do all the talking.' He stood at the table and watched Mr Carpe opening the letters. 'Anythink particular in them letters?'

'Nothing particular. Begging letters most of them. Here is an answer to the inquiries you wished me to make about the widow, Mrs Pearson, and her boy. I wrote to the clergyman of the parish. He says it is a genuine case.'

Moses Mendoza took the letter, and read it through. 'He writes like a gentleman, Carpe, and the woman is in trouble. Send 'er ten pounds.'

'I will attend to it to-morrow, sir,' said Mr Carpe, laying the letter aside.

'No, no, Carpe,' said Moses Mendoza, shaking his head in reproof. 'Write the cheque now, and I'll sign it. Don't keep the poor woman waiting; let it go off at once. When you're going to do anyone a good turn, do it immediate. Don't keep 'im waiting at the door with 'is 'at in 'is 'and.'

'Very good, sir. Here's a letter from the Bishop of Pendleshire.'

'A bishop! What does he want?'

'A subscription towards the restoration of an old church in Rainham. Dates back to William the Conqueror. You'll not send anything to that, sir?'

'Won't I? Why won't I?'

'It's for a church, sir.'

'Well?' said Moses Mendoza, with a sly look at his secretary. 'England can't do without churches, can it? You're a church-goer yourself, I 'ope?'

'Yes, sir, I am.'

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'I ain't; but that's neither 'ere nor there. Send fifty pounds, and say it comes from my son. Raphe must keep in with the bishops.'

'Very good, sir.'

Moses Mendoza went to the tape, and presently said genially, 'If they don't mind there'll be a panic. Lynwood Forest, six and a half, three-quarters.'

'Down again,' said Mr Carpe, under his breath.

From the tape Moses Mendoza went to the telephone, and rang the bell. 'Are you there? . . . Who is it? . . . Tell Penrose to come. . . . Are you there? . . . Buy Lynwood Forest.' Mr Carpe looked, and listened and wondered. Moses Mendoza continued talking through the telephone. 'Do I know what's going on? . . . Of course I do. . . . 'Ow many shall you buy? A thousand—five thousand—ten thousand.' He left the telephone with a smiling face.

'Mr Mendoza,' said Mr Carpe, lifting his hands, 'you have the heart of a lion.'

'Got to 'ave, Carpe, got to 'ave. Can't afford to funk when you're in for millions.'

'Oh, sir, to hear you talk of millions so lightly makes me gasp.'

The door was opened, and a man-servant announced, 'Sir Philip Bramble.'

CHAPTER XXIII

MOSES MENDOZA RECEIVES VISITORS

SIR PHILIP BRAMBLE entered in a state of great excitement. His face was flushed, his eyes blazed.

'Ah, you're there, Mr Mendoza,' he cried. 'Been running everywhere to catch you. Inquired at the door of the Stock Exchange. Not there. At your office. Not there. All over the City. Not there.'

'Why didn't you go to the police station?' asked Moses Mendoza, blandly.

'Don't joke, sir. All very well for you. But how about me? I call it monstrous—monstrous.'

'I don't mind, Sir Philip. Call it what you like. You don't look 'appy.'

'Happy, sir, happy! How can you expect me to look happy?'

'I don't expect you. What's the matter with you?'

'The matter, sir! Everything's the matter. The Stock Exchange is on fire—people are going mad—'

'Looks like it if they're in the state you're in.'

'That's right. Twit me, sir, twit me! Your grand Lynwood Forest Mining Company—mining for what? Tell me that, sir. Brought ruin in its train'—he almost choked.

'Oh, that's it,' said Moses Mendoza, with a broad grin on his face.

'Yes, sir, that's it. Is it not enough, don't you think?'

'Ow should I know?'

'It was your business to know. Don't tell me you didn't know. You did know. What's the result? Ruin, sir ruin! When your company came out—what did people do—on the strength of your name? Took shares in it—everybody did—I did.'

'Did I advise you to take them?' asked Moses Mendoza, with perfect good temper.

'No, sir, you did not—in so many words—but there was your flaming prospectus—and—and what were we to do?'

'As I told you. You came to me for advice, and I told you to watch the market.'

'I did watch it—for days—for weeks—I couldn't sleep for watching it.'

'And then,' continued Moses Mendoza, 'I told you to let it alone.'

'Yes—I don't dispute it. You said so—in so many words—but how about your looks?—a flat contradiction to your words. I put a special question to the Earl of Lynwood. I said to him—as friend to friend—"Are there mines in Lynwood Forest?" He almost jumped down my throat.'

'Mines in Lynwood Forest!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza. 'Why it's busting with 'em—busting!'

'Doesn't look like it. Everybody is asking everybody else the same question—'

'Are they, now—are they, now?'

'Yes, sir, they are—and what satisfaction do they get? It's abominable—could use a stronger word—refrain—out of consideration for you. I not only applied for shares—and got a few—but believing in you—blindly believing in you—I bought at a premium.' Moses Mendoza gently shook his head and smiled. 'And while you're making beggars of us—beggars, sir, beggars!—you stand there grinning. Ah, you have a tape machine—' Without

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asking permission he rushed to it and read—"Singular discovery of nine skeletons in an empty house by the river"—damn the skeletons! How can a house—by the river—with nine skeletons in it—be empty?"

'I don't know,' said Moses Mendoza, thinking the question was addressed to him. 'Arsk me another.'

'Ah, here we are,' continued Sir Philip Bramble, "Lynwood Forest, six and a quarter, six and a half." Lower and lower! He turned furiously to Moses Mendoza. 'A few days ago I could have sold at eleven—eleven, sir, eleven!'

'Why didn't you?'

'Because I believed in you—because the whole world believed in you—because you and the Earl of Lynwood—were hand and glove together—nobody suspected—and now—now—!' The ringing of the telephone bell interrupted him. 'What the devil's that? Oh, the telephone! Now we shall hear something.'

'See what it is, Carpe,' said Moses Mendoza.

Mr Carpe stepped to the telephone. 'Yes? . . . How many? . . . Penrose and Wilberforce have bought twelve thousand Lynwood Forest on your account, sir,' he said to Moses Mendoza. 'They want to know if they shall go on. There are offers to sell at six and an eighth.'

'Six and an eighth! Oh!' groaned Sir Philip Bramble, clutching his hair.

'Tell 'em to go on,' said Moses Mendoza. 'Buy all that's offered.'

Sir Philip Bramble was staggered. 'Buy all that's offered!' he muttered. 'What's the meaning of it—what's the meaning of it?'

'Buy all that's offered,' said Mr Carpe, through the telephone.

'The game you like to play, Sir Philip,' said Moses Mendoza, 'is 'eads I win, tails you lose. A-ha!'

'Cheap wit, sir, cheap wit,' said Sir Philip. 'The game *you've* been playing is not a fair game—I say, emphatically, not a fair game.'

'Well, well, well, don't use bad language. 'Ow many shares 'ave you got?'

'Eighty.'

Moses Mendoza burst out laughing. 'Ha, ha, ha! Eighty! I thought you 'ad thousands. Would you like me to take 'em off your 'ands?'

'Would I like you to take them—off my hands?'

'Of—your—'ands,' repeated Moses Mendoza, emphasising each word.

'Not at a loss, Mr Mendoza—not at a loss!'

'Shall we say at 'arf a crown a share profit on what you paid for 'em. Ten pounds clear profit for you.'

'Ten pounds profit!' groaned Sir Philip. 'And I could have made hundreds!'

'What are you groaning for? You're on velvet!'

'Shall I let him have them?' soliloquised Sir Philip, beginning to waver. 'He's deep—he's deep! There's a look in his eye—'

'Don't you want to sell?'

'Yes! No! Yes!'

'Which is it?'

'Yes!' replied Sir Philip, rushing to the tape machine.

'Make a note of it, Carpe. I buy his eighty shares at 'arf a crown profit.'

Lynwood Forest, six and a quarter,' muttered Sir Philip, reading the tape. 'They're rising again, they're rising! He's done me!' He glared angrily at Moses Mendoza, who said,—

'If you don't cool down you'll 'ave a fit.'

'The low-bred scoundrel!' thought Sir Philip. 'Will he let me have them back again? There's that Carpe at the tape.'

'A flash in the pan, Mr Mendoza,' said Mr Carpe. 'Shares falling again. Market greatly excited.'

Sir Philip Bramble brightened up. 'Shares falling again. I'm well out of it.'

'Made up your mind?' asked Moses Mendoza.

'The shares are yours.'

'That's settled, then. 'Ave a cigar?'

'Mr Mendoza,' said Sir Philip, taking the cigar, 'you are a noble character. I shall let people know it—my good word goes a long way.'

'Thank you for nothink,' said Moses Mendoza.

The man-servant opened the door. 'Lord Chilcott, Captain Verjuice.'

These gentlemen entered, bustling and eager, a marked contrast to their host, who was cool and collected.

'How do you do?' they said, shaking hands with Moses Mendoza, after which there was a little pause, broken by Lord Chilcott. 'Any news, Mr Mendoza?'

'No, I don't know none worth mentioning. Do you?'

'I've just heard,' said Lord Chilcott, nudging Captain Verjuice, 'that things were humming in the City.'

'Yes, yes, they're 'umming,' said Moses Mendoza, genially. 'Things are always 'umming in the City.'

'He doesn't seem flurried,' observed Captain Verjuice aside to Lord Chilcott. 'Does he know what's doing on the Stock Exchange?'

'What is there old Moses doesn't know?' replied Lord Chilcott.

'That's what I say.'

Moses Mendoza turned aside with Mr Carpe. Sir Philip Bramble greeted the new arrivals, and said,—

'I'd like to know—out of curiosity—whether you still hold your shares in the company?'

'No,' said Lord Chilcott. 'Verjuice and I sold out a fortnight ago at six premium.'

'Oh, why didn't I sell then?' groaned Sir Philip.

'Didn't you? That's a pity. We took our profit. Your

principle, Bramble.' A remark which caused Sir Philip to groan again.

'Lady Martindale. Mrs Vayne. Madame Blitz,' announced the man-servant.

The ladies were dressed in the height of fashion, and no signs of agitation were observable on their countenances, Mrs Vayne especially being calm and tranquil. Lady Martindale was accompanied by her hideous pug Cupid, who was more than ever absurdly dressed, and seemed very unhappy.

'My dear Mr Mendoza,' said Mrs Vayne, in a tone of extreme cordiality, 'we heard that a deputation of the Patriotic League was to wait on you this morning, and we were so anxious to add our little meed of admiration'—here she applauded gracefully with the tips of her fingers—'to the general chorus, that we ventured to intrude.'

'Appy to see you, ladies all,' said Moses Mendoza.

'So kind of you! I am going to write a little notice of the function, and I daresay when you read it that you will consider it flattering.'

'You do me proud, Mrs Vayne.'

'And I must congratulate you upon the success of your son in the House last night. What strides he is making!'

'Wonderful,' said Madame Blitz. 'So young—so clever!'

'A-ha! A-ha!' chuckled Moses Mendoza, rubbing his hands. 'He made 'em set up, didn't he?'

'He did indeed. Step this way a moment. Another little matter. Private. Quite between us. We three ladies are in sad trouble.'

'I'm sorry to 'ear that. Anythink I can do?'

'I think so. So good of you to suggest it! We took a few shares in the Lynwood Forest Mining Company.'

'Did you, now?'

'I hope you don't consider it immoral.'

'Not a bit of it. Women are fond of a little gamble. Why not, why not, the pretty dears?'

'We have heard,' said Mrs Vayne, shaking her finger archly at him, 'quite indirectly, you know, that the shares have gone down.'

'Ave they, now?'

'And it stands to reason that ladies in our position can't afford to lose.' She repeated the words, dwelling archly on each syllable. 'Can't—af—ford—to—lose.'

'Why, of course not. Why should you? It would 'ardly be fair.'

'How clearly, how strongly, you explain our position!'

'Let us see, let us see,' said Moses Mendoza, calling a profound look into his eyes, as though, like the letter C, he was putting on his Considering Cap. 'As the shares 'ave gone down you want me to take 'em off your 'ands at a profit. Is that it?'

'How could you guess, Mr Mendoza? I declare I am quite frightened of you!'

'I wouldn't be if I was you. Don't worry about your shares—I'll take 'em.'

'Shall we say,' asked Mrs Vayne, insinuatingly, 'at a pound a share profit?'

'Yes, yes, yes. 'Ow many have you got betwixt you?'

'A hundred and fifty—fifty each.'

'I'm let off cheap. Consider it settled.'

'You're a darling!' said Mrs Vayne, and joined Madame Blitz and Lady Martindale.

Moses Mendoza looked after her with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, and gave soft utterances to probably the most enjoyable chuckles which had ever escaped his lips.

The entrance of Raphael put a stop to them. He advanced eagerly to his son.

'Ah, Raphe, my boy! 'Ow's things? What do the whips say?'

'They are confident. The Vote of Censure will be carried.' He looked around. 'Julia not here?'

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'No, she ain't come.'

'There are ladies present, I see.'

'They poked theirselves in. I didn't want 'em.'

'They are here in your honour, and so must Julia be.'

'Raphe,' said Moses Mendoza, with his hand on his son's coat sleeve, 'I'm getting that nervous about the deppytation—'

'It will soon be over,' said Raphael, encouragingly.

'And as for making a speech, Raphe, I'd sooner jump into the mouth of Vesuvian. I would, Raphe, if it was fizzing ever so!'

'Don't try. Call upon me.' He looked at his watch. 'There's time to fetch her.'

'Don't leave me!' cried Moses Mendoza, clinging to Raphe in trepidation as he was moving to the door. 'You ain't going, Raphe?'

'Yes, for Julia. My carriage is waiting—I'll be back in a few minutes.' He smiled reassuringly at his father, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FEW WORDS OF WARNING FROM MR CARPE TO VIVIAN ST MAUR

MEANWHILE Mrs Vayne had related to her lady companions the result of her conference with Moses Mendoza.

'There, Lady Martindale,' said Madame Blitz, 'I told you Mrs Vayne would manage it for us. We shall make a profit of fifty pounds each on our shares. That's some excuse for your extravagance over Cupid.'

'Do you like the darling's new costume?' asked Lady Martindale, mournfully. 'I call it fetching, myself.'

'It is—very,' snapped Mrs Vayne. She had no love for pugs.

'My sweet little pet became quite fretful while he was being fitted,' continued Lady Martindale. 'It was a trying time.'

'A trying-on time,' suggested Madame Blitz.

'Don't joke on the subject—I can't bear it. I am sure he has an internal complaint. His sufferings are dreadful. My darling—my sweet, suffering darling!'

'There's that fool of a woman with that beast of a dog,' said Sir Philip Bramble to Lord Chilcott. 'What is she saying about it?' He moved near to the group of ladies.

'I was up with him the whole of last night,' said Lady Martindale, not observing the gentleman. 'I put a mustard poultice on his chest. He didn't like it.'

An explosion of laughter from Sir Philip Bramble caused

her to exclaim indignantly, 'Have you no heart, Sir Philip?'

'For a puppy!' he answered. 'No, thank Heaven, I have not!'

The announcement of another visitor, Mr Vivian St Maur, produced no stir, except from Mr Carpe, who, observing that Vivian looked around, as though for some person whom he expected to see, accosted him.

'Are you seeking anyone in particular, Mr St Maur?'

'No one. I was merely looking to see who was here.'

'I fancy not. Mr St Maur, we have not had the pleasure of your company at my house for the last eight days.'

'I have been too busy to go anywhere. This cursed panic has occupied every minute of my time.'

'It is not a valid excuse, and, I fear, is but a subterfuge. Gertrude has been wondering what has become of you.'

'I have written to her.'

'Yes, you have written, and I trust she has kept your letters.'

Vivian bit his lips. 'Have you told her to keep them?'

'No. Nor have I mentioned to her what I have heard.'

'What you have heard!'

'She believes so implicitly in your honour that a word from me in your disparagement would cause her great misery. Indeed, she would refuse to believe it. I spoke to you a little while ago concerning my wish that the engagement between you and my daughter should no longer be concealed—'

Vivian interrupted him by saying in an undertone, 'It will be best to continue this conversation at another time and in another place.'

'I would prefer—without, I trust, giving you offence,' said Mr Carpe, with no trace of passion in his voice, 'to say what I have to say here and now. We shall not be overheard if we move a little this way. They'—with a

motion of his head in the direction of Moses Mendoza and the company—‘have their own affairs to think of, we have—ours. My wish with respect to the public announcement of the engagement has been ignored—not by my daughter, to whom I have not spoken on the subject—but by you. It is with regret that I make the admission that she is more completely under your domination than mine. It is, I suppose, the usual fate of fathers, and I must submit; but while she is still to some extent under my protection I shall do my duty by her. Mr St Maur, I am a patient man, a quiet, patient man. The worm is a poor, weak creature, but when it is trodden on it turns.’

‘Oh, spare me the copybook,’ said Vivian, impatiently.

‘Take care, Mr St Maur, take care! We live in a censorious, observant world. Your attentions to Lady Julia have been noticed—and noticed by persons who have no immediate interest in our affairs.’

‘My attentions!’ exclaimed Vivian, with a weak laugh. ‘Why, we are cousins!’

‘They are more than cousinly attentions, Mr St Maur.’

‘You have been setting a watch upon me.’

‘There has been no need to set a watch. What I have observed has been forced upon my attention. I have seen you and Lady Julia riding and walking together too frequently. I have noted your demeanour towards her in the public thoroughfares, and in the theatre, where Gertrude, and not the lady I speak of, should have been your companion. I am not aware whether these matters have forced themselves upon the attention of Mr Raphael Mendoza, but in any circumstances they cannot be very long concealed from his knowledge.’

‘Upon my honour, Mr Carpe,’ said Vivian, and stopped short.

‘Proceed. Upon your honour—’

‘Never mind. Speak plainly, can’t you?’

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'I am endeavouring to do so,' said Mr Carpe. 'There is another person—whose particular style of attire proclaims that she belongs to the humbler class—between whom and yourself something not agreeable to a father's feelings appears to be going on. On Sunday last I was walking on the Embankment, and saw you in the company of a young woman. She was weeping, and seemed to be making an appeal to you. I thought the circumstance suspicious—'

'And you followed us. A very gentlemanly proceeding.'

'I did not follow you. You and she passed out of my sight. But I have thought of it since, and have been greatly distressed—'

'As a censor of morals you must indeed have been grieved,' sneered Vivian. 'Is it not possible that the woman might have been trying to work on my feelings by a harrowing tale of poverty? Women have followed you, I dare swear, on the same pretext.'

'I will give you the benefit of the doubt. You will pardon me for mentioning that as a lawyer and a friend I have shielded you from the consequences of certain—to use a mild term—imprudences. Imprudences. I have involved myself to a greater extent than was justified by paying your losses in various speculations on the Stock Exchange and elsewhere. All this I have done for my child's sake; but Mr St Maur, I must not—I will not—allow her happiness to be jeopardised. You have a hold upon her affections. Be careful how you use it. It is, I fear, a great misfortune that she can believe no ill of you.'

'But you can; and you can place the worst construction upon my innocent actions. I am a gentleman, Mr Carpe, and I am too proud to defend myself from false accusations.'

'I have had my experiences; I know the world. Gertrude has had no experiences; she does not know the world. I speak to you as a father to whose daughter you are engaged

to be married. You have no intention of breaking your promise, Mr St Maur ?'

'None whatever.'

'Let the past then be buried.' He paused for a moment, and seemed to breathe more freely. 'By the way, is it not the custom, when a gentleman is engaged to a lady, that he give her a ring ?'

'I believe so,' said Vivian, uneasily.

'You have not given Gertrude one.'

'I have been too hard up.'

'You get a liberal salary from Mr Raphael Mendoza. So far as I know there are no claims upon it.'

'I have a number of private debts to wipe off; I am pressed on all sides. As you are so anxious about the ring, perhaps you will lend me the money to buy one.'

'I have done better than that; I have purchased one myself which will delight Gertrude. Let it be your gift to her when you see her.' He gave Vivian a ring in a case, which the unwilling lover sulkily pocketed.

'Does she know that you purchased it?'

'Oh, no; she would not value it if she knew. You purchased it yourself. We will settle for it by-and-by.'

'Catechism finished?' asked Vivian, with an insolent drawl.

'I think so—I think so. Things do not look very bright for us at present; let us hope they will come right; the wheel of fortune is always going round.'

'Curse the white-faced cad !' thought Vivian, as Mr Carpe went to his writing-table. 'A pretty hornet's nest I've made for myself!'

'Lady Julia—the Earl of Lynwood,' announced the man-servant.

'Appy to see you, Julia,' said Moses Mendoza. She bent her head coldly, and passed on to Vivian. 'Don't seem very 'appy to see *me*, earl.'

'Women have moods, Mr Mendoza—ha, hum!—moods,' said the earl. 'We must make allowances for them; we must be—ha, hum!—indulgent.'

'Certainly, certainly, if you say so.'

'This is an important function, Mr Mendoza.'

'Function!'

'I refer to the deputation in your honour.'

'I didn't know that was its name. I'm learning things, I am. Earl, I'd give anything if it was over. Never felt so nervous in all my life.'

As if in defiance of Mr Carpe's warnings, Vivian St Maur was paying the usual attention to Lady Julia. Mrs Vayne and Madame Blitz exchanged significant glances.

'Still going on,' observed Madame Blitz.

'Playing with fire,' responded Mrs Vayne.

'Did you notice the guarded conversation between Mr St Maur and Mr Carpe? What did it mean?'

'Nothing to their credit. When people speak in that fashion there is generally something they wish to conceal. I have heard that Mr Carpe has a pretty daughter.'

'Ah!' said Madame Blitz, with an air of enjoyment.

'That looks significant,' said Mrs Vayne, directing her friend's attention to Raphael, who had entered. 'Does he call check to our friend, Mr St Maur?'

'It is high time his eyes were opened,' replied Madame Blitz.

Raphael had gone to Lady Julia and Vivian, and stepping between them had conducted his wife to Moses Mendoza and the earl, indicating by his action that that was her proper place. Vivian, shrugging his shoulders, had not followed them.

The door was thrown open, and the man-servant announced, in a pompous voice, 'Mr Pawle-Simpson and the members of the Patriotic League!'

A number of gentlemen bustled in, and gazed about them

with an air of importance. Mr Pawle-Simpson greeted the earl, who led him to Moses Mendoza.

‘Mr Mendoza, allow me to introduce Mr Pawle-Simpson, Chairman of the Patriotic League. Gentlemen, Mr Moses Mendoza.’

‘You had better stop the tape,’ said Raphael to Mr Carpe.

When the hand-shaking was over, Moses Mendoza said aside to the earl, ‘Did you ever ’ave a tooth out?’

‘Several.’

‘That’s ’ow I feel.’

The members of the deputation arranged themselves, and Moses Mendoza, who had vainly endeavoured to sneak to the back, was placed in a conspicuous position opposite Mr Pawle-Simpson, who held in his hand a rolled sheet of parchment. Moses Mendoza, in great perturbation, mopped his face with his handkerchief, and glueing himself to his son, whispered,—

‘Stick by me, Raphe, stick by me!’

Raphael rested his hand on the old man’s shoulder, and Mr Pawle-Simpson advanced and cleared his throat.

CHAPTER XXV

IN HONOUR OF MOSES MENDOZA

‘MR MOSES MENDOZA—Sir,’ commenced Mr Pawle-Simpson, ‘We, the appointed representatives of the Patriotic League—a body of ladies and gentlemen who have at heart the national interests of their fatherland—have been deputed by the committee to present you with a testimonial’—he unrolled the sheet of parchment—‘on which is inscribed a resolution unanimously carried at a special meeting of the members convened for the purpose. Some brief notices of that meeting have crept into the public journals, but these have conveyed but a faint impression of its enthusiastic nature. Generally at meetings of members of great institutions some note of dissent makes itself heard; here there was none. There was but one voice, but one desire—to do honour to the patriotism you have displayed. Risen, sir, as you are from the ranks of the people—a circumstance of which we feel sure you are not ashamed—’

‘Ashamed!’ muttered Moses Mendoza, his voice rather thick. ‘Not a bit of it. Why should I be?’

‘Hear, hear, hear!’ from the deputation.

‘And belonging as you do to an alien race, your munificent gift of a great battleship to the nation has drawn from all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest, the warmest admiration—admiration, I am pleased to say, which has found its echo in the world’s press. You have gained great wealth, and you are using it nobly. In regard to the national honour

and safety, the latter of which has never been in more serious peril than it is to-day, you have set an example which the wealthy classes might follow, to their own glory and advantage, and to the glory and advantage of the land of their birth.'

Radical members of the deputation were very emphatic in their 'Hear, hear, hear!'

'We might, sir, have presented you with a testimonial in the form of jewels and gold, but we felt that the simplest form of appreciation would be more acceptable to you.'

'Quite so, quite so,' murmured Moses Mendoza.

'I will now read the resolution. "That the cordial thanks of the members of the Patriotic League be accorded to Mr Moses Mendoza for his noble gift of a battleship to the nation, and that the same be inscribed on vellum, and presented to him in the name of the members." It only remains to me to add that this deputation represents the intellect and the heart of the British people—'

Loud cries of 'Hear, hear, hear!' and gratified nods from the representatives.

'And that the testimonial, simple as it is, is the highest tribute which the Patriotic League can offer to any man whom it wishes to honour.'

Amid general applause the testimonial was handed to Moses Mendoza, who turned it over and over in trepidation. Then Mr Pawle-Simpson said,—

'Silence for Mr Moses Mendoza!'

All eyes were turned upon him, and he made efforts to respond, but his words stuck in his throat. At length he said, in an undertone to his son,—

'Can't get a word out to save my life! Raphe, my boy, tell 'em what I feel.'

Raphael stepped forward, holding his father's hand.

'Mr Pawle-Simpson, and gentlemen of the Patriotic League,' he said, 'I am requested by my father to acknowledge the vote of thanks here inscribed, and the grace—'

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ful address which accompanied its presentation. To have earned, in the midst of his busy life, this mark of appreciation from an important body of his fellow citizens is exceedingly gratifying to him. He fully appreciates the honour you have bestowed upon him, and will hold the testimonial as one of his most valued possessions. He thanks you from his heart.'

'Ear, 'ear, 'ear!' murmured Moses Mendoza. 'Them's my sentiments.'

'If you will permit me,' continued Raphael, 'to make a remark or two not quite pertinent to the special purpose of this gathering—'

'Certainly, sir, certainly,' said several members of the deputation.

'Mr Pawle-Simpson referred to my father as belonging to an alien race. It is an old and familiar phrase, and at one time in our history was undoubtedly appropriate. Hospitably as our forefathers were received when they fled from foreign oppressors and took refuge under England's glorious flag, there have been dark pages in the history of our settlement here. But there have been dark pages in the history of every race, of every people, of every nation, and we share with others in the good and the evil of the time that is past. The blessings of advanced civilisation have cheered our progress as they have cheered yours. My contention is that in the present altered conditions of society the term "alien race" is not applicable to us. We of the Jewish race are most heartily in sympathy with you in all that affects the welfare and prosperity of the nation. We are part of the nation—we belong to it—we are no longer an alien race. No more faithful citizen can be found than the Jewish citizen, none more devoted and single-hearted, none more loyal to the Throne and Constitution. Your laws are our laws—your halls of justice our halls of justice—your Queen our Queen—our revered Queen, the

most beneficent Sovereign who ever ruled over the destinies of a great nation. In peace and war we are one. In art and science, in earnest efforts to ameliorate suffering, we strive to vie with you, and are proud to march shoulder to shoulder by your side. Divergence in religious views applies equally to the Christian and the Jew, and at no great distance of time it will be generally recognised that beneath the crust of civil and religious custom there is very little difference, if any, in the aims and hopes of Jew and Christian alike.'

'Grand, grand, grand!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza, who had listened with rapt attention to the speech. 'He speaks like a prophet! My boy! My son!'

They all pressed forward to shake hands with Raphael, and the earl said to him,—

'Your sentiments do you honour, and could not have been more eloquently expressed.'

'I am glad you approve,' said Raphael, and with something of wistfulness in his look his eye sought Julia's; but her head was lowered.

'Will not Mr Moses Mendoza favour us with a few words?' said Mr Pawle-Simpson. All stood attentive.

'Wish I could think of somethink good to say,' he murmured helplessly. 'I've got no 'ead—I've got no 'ead!' Suddenly he said aloud, 'Yes, I know. Gentlemen, God save the Queen!'

Everyone applauded and cried, 'God save the Queen!'

Then the formal arrangement of the grouping broke up, and the company moved about.

'An admirable finale to these most interesting proceedings,' observed the earl.

For a few minutes the conversation became informal and discursive, until Mr Pawle-Simpson said, 'I think, gentlemen, we have finished our business. Good-day, my lord; good-day, Mr Mendoza.'

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'Good day, good day,' said Moses Mendoza, producing a box of cigars. 'Ave a cigar before you go, won't you? Bought 'em in Bond Street—they cost—' The pressure of Raphael's hand on his shoulder stopped him— 'Eh?' he said. 'Well, well, well, never mind what they cost. They're worth smoking, ain't they, Raphe?'

'They are excellent cigars,' said Raphael, and the members of the deputation, having helped themselves, took their departure. While they were leaving, Raphael stepped to Julia's side. 'With the exception of you, Julia, and Mr St Maur, every person here has shaken hands with my father, and has said a pleasant word to him.' She toyed with her fan. 'Have you no word for him?'

She evaded the question, and said listlessly, 'You made an admirable speech.'

'Thank you for that, Julia. But my father!' It was an appeal.

'Surely you know that we have no sympathies in common.'

'Can you not by this time find some excuse for his unpolished manners? He has the tenderest heart, and he is my father!' She continued to toy with her fan. 'And we are man and wife!'

Still she made no response; with a sigh, Raphael turned aside.

The telephone bell rang, and Mr Carpe answered it. 'Yes? . . . Very serious? . . . I will tell him.' He went to Moses Mendoza, and said in a low tone, 'Penrose and Wilberforce say things are looking so serious in the City that it is absolutely necessary you should go there immediately.'

'All right—and you come with me, Carpe,' he replied; and then said to Julia, 'I'm going to the City. What a speech Raphael made, didn't he? What a speech—what a speech! I shall be in the 'Ouse to-night to 'ear the end-

of the debate. May I 'ave the honour of driving you there?'

'I am going with my father,' she said.

'Shall see you there, then. It'll be a grand night—a grand night. Ta-ta!' He nodded genially all around, and bustled off with Mr Carpe.

'You are a born orator, Mr Mendoza,' said Mrs Vayne, first addressing Raphael, and then Lady Julia, 'I have heard your husband's speech in the House last night described as masterly, Lady Julia. It must be very gratifying to you.' The thin light in her half-closed eyes fell upon Lady Julia, and then upon Raphael. She turned to Madame Blitz, who asked,—

'What are they thinking of?'

'The skeleton in the cupboard,' replied Mrs Vayne. 'It stares her in the face, but I have half an idea that this is his first peep at it. My dear Mr Mendoza, you have the ball at your feet. How proud your father must be of you!'

'He is not prouder of me than I am of him,' said Raphael, very slowly, and with marked emphasis.

The covert malice of these women, the scarcely-veiled contempt for the absent man, at whose feet they were ready to fall, the suffering caused by the relentless attitude of his wife towards his father, conspired to wring from him a vindication which sprang no less from his heart than from his sense of justice.

'Well, now,' blurted out Sir Philip Bramble, 'I shouldn't have thought that. One would imagine—'

'What?' demanded Raphael.

'Nothing—nothing,' said Sir Philip, disconcerted by Raphael's steady gaze.

'You must excuse Sir Philip,' said Mrs Vayne, stepping into the breach. 'He is so outspoken. His boast is that he calls a spade a spade, but that is not always politic, is it,

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Mr Mendoza? We all admire the old gentleman—do we not, Lady Julia? Do we not?’ To her lady friends.

‘Immensely,’ said Lady Martindale, vacantly.

‘I adore him,’ said Madame Blitz. ‘He is so—original!’

‘His genius for finance,’ continued Mrs Vayne, ‘his wonderful successes in the money-making way, his good nature, his whimsical sayings—so entertaining, you know—my dear Lady Julia, you are greatly to be envied in the connection.’

Lady Julia looked disdainfully at the speaker, who returned the look with an affectionate smile.

‘There are nobler qualities in my father,’ said Raphael, ‘than those you have mentioned—qualities which command a higher tribute than cold admiration.’

‘As, for instance?’ queried Mrs Vayne.

‘An infinite capacity for sincere, devoted, unselfish love.’

‘Of course he loves you, and of course you love him—you are his son. But, after all, what is the love of a man for a man?’

‘Sometimes as strong as the love of a man for a woman.’

‘Oh, really, really, now!’ protested Mrs Vayne.

‘Or the love of a woman for a man,’ continued Raphael. ‘Sometimes stronger, more enduring, built upon a surer foundation, capable of a higher sacrifice. Love in which there is no calculation or deceit, and which does not bring misery in its train.’

‘What a frightful picture!’ exclaimed Madame Blitz.

‘Mr Mendoza speaks feelingly,’ said Mrs Vayne.

‘I speak as I feel. Proud of my father! Ay, uneducated as he is, and though he has upon him the taint—for so by small-minded persons it is esteemed—of humble breeding. And how he loves me! I am the joy of his life. With the eyes of his heart he has watched my progress from the day I was born.’

‘My dear Lady Julia,’ said Mrs Vayne, ‘is it not

refreshing in these *blasé* days to hear a son speak in such terms of his father?’

‘In what other terms should I speak of my benefactor? Base should I be ever to forget! Shall I tell you what he has done for me? He said, “My son shall not grow up as I am; he shall be a gentleman”—that was his way of putting it, and his humble opinion of himself—“I will arm him to fight life’s battle in a higher groove than the one I occupy.” That was his sole ambition, his dearest wish, and he set about his task with a devotion which it will never be in my power to repay. He was not rich in those days—he lived in the meanest part of this great and sorrowful city—but by untiring industry and the exercise of a shrewd wit he was making a little money, every farthing of which he spent upon my education. In the pursuit of his business he drove hard bargains, perhaps, but never in his life was he guilty of a dishonest action. And even in his poverty his eyes were sympathisingly open to the poverty of those among whom he lived. Of how many men who have risen to wealth can the same be said?’

‘Not many, Raphael, not many,’ said the earl, standing straight and erect by Raphael’s side.

‘He worked, he slaved from morning till night, saving every farthing he could to spend upon me. He stinted himself to send me to the best schools, he stinted himself more to send me to college, for years he lived in one poor room, and took no merit to himself for the sacrifices he was making. Never has one word fallen from his lips to denote that he was doing anything unusual, or in glorification of the duty he had set himself to perform. But I knew how sweet and beautiful was the task he was performing, and when I was at school and college every honour I won was dearer to me because of the pleasure it gave that noble, unselfish heart; and it was this that spurred me on. It

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was in my college days that the tide for which he was waiting rolled towards him. He took it at its flood, and was rewarded with success. He made a fortune—a great fortune—and while it grew he rejoiced, not for his own sake, but for mine; not because he was greedy for money and worshipped it, but because it gave me the opportunity of rising in the social scale and carrying out my ambition. That, and that alone, has been the aim of my dear father's life.'

'You have spoken nobly,' said the earl, pressing Raphael's hand.

'I have said what is just,' Raphael responded.

'I don't think Lady Julia quite relishes that defence,' said Mrs Vayne, aside to her lady friends. 'I am not sorry; her conduct is intolerable; she has behaved very rudely to us.' Then, aloud to Raphael, 'You have risen far higher than your father could ever have hoped'—she quickly corrected herself by adding, with gracious nods, 'and no one can say you do not deserve your success.'

'A telegram, my lord,' said the man-servant, handing it to the earl.

During the latter part of this scene Sir Philip Bramble had gone to the tape machine.

'The confounded thing has stopped,' he muttered, 'and I'm in a fever to know how things are progressing on the Stock Exchange. I'm off.'

'He's going to the Stock Exchange,' said Lord Chilcott to Captain Verjuice. 'We'll go with him.'

Sir Philip glared at them as they approached him.

'Let's go together,' said Lord Chilcott.

'Beastly nuisance,' he muttered. 'What do they want there?'

With bows of farewell the three gentlemen took their departure, Sir Philip hurrying first, the others close upon his heels.

'Your father wishes to see me in the City,' said the earl to Raphael. 'Something about our company, I fancy. There is a little—ha, hum!—depression in the shares. Nothing to be alarmed at, he says. Can you spare Vivian?'

'Oh, yes, I can spare him.'

'He will accompany me to the City. You go to the House early, Raphael?'

'Yes.'

'At what time do you expect the division to take place?'

'Not before midnight.'

'I shall be there. Come, Vivian.'

As they passed to the door, Mrs Vayne said to her lady friends,—

'It is time for us also to leave. We will not intrude upon you any longer, Lady Julia. You and your husband must have so much to say to each other! This has been a charming function.'

'Delightful!' said Madame Blitz.

'So exhilarating!' said Lady Martindale. 'I really believe it has brightened Cupid. The darling is so sympathetic!'

'It was quite a privilege to be present,' said Mrs Vayne. 'I daresay I shall be able to say something nice about it in my papers. My dear Mr Mendoza, your interesting defence of your father has, I assure you, left a deep impression. Good day, Lady Julia.'

'Good day,' from Madame Blitz.

'Good day,' from Lady Martindale.

All smirks and smiles, the ladies left husband and wife to themselves.

'If I am not greatly mistaken,' whispered Mrs Vayne to Madame Blitz, as they descended the stairs, 'there will be a scene between them.' Aloud she said, 'This is rather a handsome staircase. But have you noticed the balustrade

in Lady Julia's house? It is the most beautiful malachite in England, and was brought direct from Prince Demidoff's mines in Siberia. Mr Moses Mendoza told me it cost twenty thousand pounds. With such a father-in-law, and such a staircase, they ought to be very happy, ought they not?'

CHAPTER XXVI

HUSBAND AND WIFE

FOR two or three minutes there was silence in the room, Lady Julia picking a flower to pieces, which she had taken from her dress, Raphael gazing at her with the expression of a man who found himself suddenly confronted with a painful problem. He was the first to break the silence.

‘Julia!’ She made no reply. ‘Julia!’

‘I hear you.’ But she did not look at him.

‘I have the right to demand a better attention,’ he said.

She turned and faced him.

‘Oh, yes, you have the right to demand,’ she said scornfully.

‘I ask your pardon. The word slipped from me. Why have you acted as you have done to-day?’

‘I have acted to-day no differently from any other day.’

‘Nay, nay—’

‘You know it,’ she said, ‘or you are—blind.’

‘Blind!’

‘You understand too well the relations in which we stand to each other. It is useless to deny it, unless it is your pleasure to mock me.’

‘Indeed, Julia,’ he said sadly, ‘this is no time for mockery.’

‘No, it is the time for plain and honest speaking. I am sick of the life I am living—I can endure it no longer!’

‘Of what, of whom, do you complain?’

The Pride of Race

'Of you, of myself, of everything by which I am surrounded!'

'Have I been living in a fool's paradise?' said Raphael, as if communing with himself. 'Yes, let us speak honestly and plainly. I may be able to undeceive you.'

'That you cannot do, for you have never deceived me—no, not for a single moment. From first to last I have seen through your assumed pleasant tolerance of the feelings I entertain for you. On my part there has been no disguise, and your affectation of ignorance has been a studied insult.'

'God knows it has never been my intention. Are you in earnest, Julia?'

'Look in my face, and seek the answer there.'

'I begin to see—not light but darkness.'

The grief in his voice did not touch her, so absorbed was she in the imaginary burden of unhappiness he had laid upon her.

'How have you treated me?' she continued. 'As if I were incapable of serious thought, as if I were a child, to whom it was a pastime to behave with contemptuous indulgence. I was not a woman to be taken seriously, but a child to be soothed with toys and gewgaws. And yet my life, and all the higher purposes of my life, are as important to me as your life and purposes are to you.'

'It were monstrous to dispute it. In what way have I failed in my duty towards you?'

'Oh, do not let us talk of duty! I am not your equal in sophistry. I have not the art to make black appear white. How have you failed in your duty? In every way. Even within the last few minutes you brought humiliation upon me by what you said to these women whom I abhor and detest.'

'I share your feeling, but they are not my friends; I have not forced them upon you, and I would prefer that you do not associate with them.'

'Then why do they come?'

'I do not know. In what I said to them, surely you could see that I was defending my father from the slighting allusions they made to him. I am proud that all the world shall know how I love and honour my father.'

'And for the purpose of lecturing me in their presence you made a parade of that love, and, in honouring him, lowered me.'

'No, no!'

'You did—and they enjoyed the arrows you flung at me. You saw the malicious glances they cast at me while you spoke, and you encouraged them? At this moment they are talking of the scene and laughing at him and me, putting their own construction upon what you said about the love of a man for a man and the love of a man for a woman. Well, what does it matter to me that the man you love is your father, and that the woman you love less is your wife? I care not—I care not! But if you think that you can make others see him as you see him you are making a mistake. They will never see him so—never, never!'

'It may be that some will not, but you, at least, should speak of him with kindness. He has none but loving thoughts for you.'

'I do not want them; I will not have them! It is an offence to thrust such love upon me. Why am I here this day except to minister to his vanity, and yours? I hear these women saying, "See a Lynwood grovelling at the feet of Mr Moses Mendoza!" Can I fall lower than that?'

'Oh, hush, Julia! Do not give utterance to words that can never be recalled.'

'I was dragged here against my will.'

'It was your father's wish that you should be present.'

'And your wish.'

'Yes, and my wish.'

'There is nothing you or your father can suggest to the Earl of Lynwood that he would be likely to oppose. Your influence over him is supreme ; but it is not so with me. With all my heart I rebel against it. Oh, when I think of what I am expected to bear, I cry for release !'

She threw up her hands, and looked around in despair.

'Release !' exclaimed Raphael. 'From what — from whom ?'

'From this life of daily torture—from you !'

'From me !' He advanced a step towards her, retreated, and raised his hand to his forehead. 'A bitter awakening from a cherished dream, to learn—perhaps too late—that you do not love me !'

'You know, you know I do not love you !'

'I know it now, to my bitter sorrow. Did you never love me ?'

'Never !'

For a moment or two he was dazed ; then a sad smile came to his lips, and he said in a gentle tone of pity,—

'And all these months you have laboured under a fancied wrong—'

She interrupted him vehemently. 'A fancied wrong? You married me !'

'With your free will and consent.'

'With my chained will and consent.'

'Yes, yes—I understand you now. But had I not believed your heart was mine when you consented to be my wife, I would have cut off my right hand rather than have placed it in yours ! Why, why did you accept me ?'

'You ask me that, when you know that I had to choose between you and my father's ruin ! You held this terror over our heads—'

'I? I?'

'You. My father left the issue to me, and in a moment

of weakness I listened to you and yielded. To my shame ! To my despair !'

'No shame which reflects upon me, and for which I am accountable,' said Raphael, in a firm tone, 'no despair that is not of your own creating. Indeed, indeed it would have been better had you given me credit for some spark of manly feeling. When I proposed to you I was not aware that there were any business transactions between your father and mine, nor do I believe that threats so base were used. To have traded thus upon a young girl's future would have been an infamy. I am within my right to ask for proof. It is my hope that you do not echo the Earl of Lynwood's words.'

She was constrained to reply, 'My father does not feel as I feel.'

'Thank God for that ; but I expected no less from so high-minded a gentleman. Nor would my father have followed the course of which you accuse us.' (A feeling of amazement crept upon her here. It might almost have been supposed from his words that the Mendozas were sitting in judgment upon the Lynwoods.) 'As for myself,' he continued, 'it is true that I had seen and loved you, but I did not venture to speak to you of my love, you were so high in the social scale, I so low. How my hope grew I can scarcely recall, except that my visits to your father's house were encouraged and appeared to give pleasure to him and to you. There lived no happier man than I on the day that, with your father's sanction, I spoke to you of my love ; and when you consented to be my wife, and I spoke of my ambitious hopes for the future, you listened and seemed to sympathise. I was not acting a part !'

'Implying that I was,' she said disdainfully.

'Were you not ?' He waited for a reply, but she gave none ; it did not mitigate the bitterness of her feelings that he should advance arguments which she could not refute.

The Pride of Race

'If what I have said has caused you pain, my answer is that you have accused me of an act of baseness which, were it true, would shame my manhood. Do not think that I mean to reproach you. From my heart I pity you. But a fatal error has been committed, and both you and I have to bear the consequences. How best to bear them? That is the problem we have to deal with. If I cannot win your love—'

'Impossible! Impossible!' she cried.

'I may at least win your respect.'

'Respect!' she echoed scornfully. 'Is that what a woman lives for?'

'A woman may live for something worse,' he replied.

'I thank you for the insult,' she said with flashing eyes.

'I do not intend it as one. What is it you wish me to do?'

'Release me!' she cried passionately. 'Set me free!'

'No way is open to release you, with honour,' he said, speaking now very slowly and deliberately, 'for my good name is dearer to me than life itself; and in protecting it I am protecting you. The finger of scorn shall not be pointed at us. We must live our lives, and keep from the knowledge of the world the sad truth that we are bound, yet estranged, and that the tie which unites us is a mockery.'

'Will that content me, do you think? A life of slow, dull misery? Do you give a thought to my happiness?'

He shook his head mournfully. 'Happiness, I fear, is not for you or for me. As we sow, we reap. We live in the world, and must obey its laws.'

A restless swaying of her body accompanied her reply. 'What if I defy the world's laws? What if I take my fate in my own hands?'

'Hush, hush!' he said, his hand uplifted. 'You are speaking under the influence of an unnatural excitement—'

The door was thrown open, and the servant announced, 'Mr Vivian St Maur!'

The false counsellor advanced towards the agitated woman, but paused upon seeing that she was not alone. Raphael observed the change in Julia's face, the change from reckless despair to joyful relief. At the same moment she also observed on her husband's face the passing of a cloud, as though a note in the *roué's* voice had conveyed an answer to a silent question.

'I came on the chance of finding my cousin here,' said Vivian, 'and offering her my escort. Were you going, Julia?'

'Yes.'

'I will take you to your carriage.'

'Lady Julia does not need your services, Mr St Maur,' said Raphael, coldly.

While she hesitated between the two, the door was thrown open again, and the servant announced, 'Miss Carpe!'

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CLOUDS THICKEN WHILE THE FATHER DREAMS

GERTRUDE CARPE, a pretty young woman, with a bright and vivacious manner, ran eagerly to Vivian, and in a blithe voice cried,—

‘Oh, Vivian, you here! How delightful!’

In her eagerness she had eyes only for the man she loved, and would have thrown her arms around his neck had he not restrained her.

‘Can’t you see we’re not alone?’ he whispered pettishly.

‘Oh!’ she exclaimed, falling back; and then, with a shy glance at Lady Julia and Raphael, ‘I beg your pardon.’

Julia’s eyes travelled from Gertrude to Vivian; Gertrude’s face was suffused with blushes, Vivian was biting his lip. It was the first time the ladies had met.

‘You are Mr Carpe’s daughter,’ said Raphael, in a kind tone.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I am Mr Raphael Mendoza. Shall we go, Julia?’

She accepted his arm, and without taking any further notice of Vivian they left the room.

Vivian paced up and down in anger. Gertrude watched him in surprise.

‘A nice thing you have done for me!’ he said at length.

‘Why, Vivian, what have I done?’ she exclaimed.

‘Running up to me like that when people were present!’ he fumed. ‘Where were your eyes?’

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'I didn't see them,' Gertrude pleaded, 'else, of course—' she interrupted herself brightly. 'But there's nothing to be ashamed of. Was that Lady Julia?'

'Yes.'

'How beautiful she is! If I were a man I should fall straight in love with her—yes, I should!' She looked at him archly. 'We are alone now, Vivian!'

'Well?' he said morosely.

'Don't be cross. I'm sorry.' She raised her face demurely, inviting a kiss. 'Well, sir!'

'Oh, there!' he said, kissing her carelessly.

'I don't call that a kiss,' she said, nestling fondly up to him. 'Vivian, dear, you're worried.'

'How clever of you!' he sneered.

'Don't speak in that tone, sir—it isn't nice. But you *are* worried, dear!'

'Out of my life.'

'Oh, dear! About what?'

'A thousand things.'

'I wish I could set the thousand things right. Are you stumped again?'

'Of course I am.'

'Poor Vivian! You always are stumped.'

'Always.'

'Oh, if I were only a fairy!'

'Not much good wishing.'

'That's the worst of it,' she said, taking out her purse. 'Father's worried, too, I'm afraid.' She emptied her purse into the palm of her hand, and held out the coins.

'One and fourpence ha'penny. All my worldly wealth. Take it, Vivian, dear!'

'Don't be silly.'

'It's you that's silly, sir! You shouldn't be so extravagant. I've a good mind to give you a serious lecture, a wise serious lecture. The idea of my being wise and serious!'

'Oh, lecture away.'

'No, it wouldn't be kind. But papa has told me.'

'Told you what?'

'A beautiful, beautiful secret. Shall I whisper it to you?'

'As you please.'

'But you know already. The ring.'

'The ring?'

'He said you had bought it, and intended to give it me to-day. I did so long for one, but I didn't like to ask you. I was sure you wouldn't forget it.'

'Oh, the ring,' said Vivian, unwillingly taking the case from his pocket. 'As he told you so much, perhaps he told you how much I gave for it.'

'He did. Twenty-four pounds, he said. Oh, Vivian, dear, you are extravagant!'

'Yes, am I not?'

'And to leave yourself without a shilling! You are good to me! Is that it in your hand?'

'Yes; take it.'

Cries of rapture escaped her as she took the ring from the case.

'Turquoise and diamonds! You knew that turquoise was my favourite stone. How lovely—how lovely! There isn't another so beautiful in all the world.' She quickly drew off her glove, and held out her finger. 'You must put it on, Vivian, dear. My engagement ring! A true lover's knot!' She kissed it again and again. 'I am the happiest girl!'

'Is it for this you came here to-day?'

'No. I thought you might give it me when you came to us this evening. I came to see papa. He is anxious about a letter, and I was to bring it to him if it arrived.'

'I'll give it to him,' said Vivian, taking the letter.

'It seems selfish of me to be so happy when you are both

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worried,' said Gertrude. 'There! I won't look at it again.' In proof of her consistency she fell to kissing the ring again.

'What is he worried about? Anything special?'

'It must be. I think he has been speculating on the Stock Exchange, and when he wants—what do you call them?—'

'Stocks and shares. Yes?'

'When he wants them to go up they go down, and when he wants them to go down they go up.'

'It's a cursed way they've got. Anything more to say, Gertrude?'

.. 'Nothing more, Vivian. Doesn't it look lovely, dear?' holding up her finger for his inspection.

'It's only a ring,' he said, not sharing her enthusiasm.

'Only a ring, sir! How can you? It's *the* ring—the only, only ring! I could worship it—yes, I could!'

'Run home, Gertrude. Your father shall have the letter.'

'I hope it will make him happy. It's from one of his stockbrokers, I think.'

'Oh, one of his stockbrokers. Run along. I've a lot of writing to do.'

'Good-bye, dear.'

'Good-bye.'

'You're not cross with me now?'

'No, no.'

'Sure?'

'Sure.'

'Well, good-bye,' she repeated wistfully.

'Good-bye, again.'

'Oh, Vivian, like that!' She raised her face for a kiss.

'Oh!'

He kissed her again, and she clung to him a moment, then ran happily from the room.

'I'm in a tight place,' soliloquised Vivian, drumming on

the table with his fingers, 'and Carpe keeps his hold upon me. Thinks me a great catch, with those lies of mine about my expectations. When I hint that they are inventions he laughs at me. That engagement ring was a cunning move of his—piling up the damages in breach of promise. Wish him joy for what he'd get out of me. But there are my letters to Gertrude. Devilish awkward if they got to Julia's knowledge. How do I stand with her? I talk, and talk, and talk, and get no further. Almost my last resource. There's that other girl, Jenny Mayfield—but that's an easier job. I didn't like the look in Julia's face when Gertrude came in. Did she suspect anything? And what was the row between her and her husband? They'd been having one—about me? It might be.' He laughed uneasily. 'Will things right themselves? They generally do right themselves—the wrong way.' He lighted a cigarette, hummed a few notes of a music-hall song, took a puff or two, then flung the cigarette savagely away. 'My cursed luck pursues me. Everything's going wrong—everything. If this panic on the Stock Exchange continues there'll be a smash-up of old Moses.' He was at the tape machine now, which he had set going. 'What will happen if he does smash up? They'll say some things about him in the papers. How will it affect Julia and her husband? More important still, how will it affect me? Not hard to guess that. Raphael Mendoza says nothing about my giving up the secretaryship—keeps me on—pays me the salary—looks upon me as a kind of pensioner, confound him! It pays for cigars, curse him! Will my luck never turn? There's baccarat at the club to-night—I'll have a plunge. Ah, here it comes.' He read the tape. 'Consols down three-eighths — South Africans down — Westralians lower and lower—Lynwood Forest below par. Whew! A drop of seven in a week. Can he stand it?'

There was nothing in Moses Mendoza's face to indicate that he could not stand it as he bustled into the room with

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Mr Carpe, loaded with the latest editions of the afternoon newspapers.

'A-ha, Mr St Maur,' he said, in a buoyant tone, 'there you are, eh? Reading the news off the tape!'

'Bad news, Mr Mendoza,' said Vivian.

'Fortune of war—fortune of war. Lose the battle to-day, win it to morrow. What papers did we buy, Carpe?'

'Everyone we could get hold of, sir—*Pall Mall, Westminster, Star, Echo, Evening News, Globe, St James's Gazette, Standard*'—he laid them down one by one as he called them over. 'The principal topics are the panic on the Stock Exchange—'

Moses Mendoza snapped his fingers. 'Oh, the panic! What's a panic? Not worth talking about.'

'And, of course, Mr Raphael's speech in the House last night, and forecasts of the division to-night.'

'They all sing the same toon, don't they?'

'All of them, sir. Nothing but praise of your son.'

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'The *St James's Gazette* calls him the man of the future.' He read from the paper. '"It is not alone Mr Raphael Mendoza's splendid gift of oratory, but the depth and soundness of his arguments, that establishes his position in the political world as the man of the future."' He mumbled over the next words.

'Ere, give it to me,' said Moses Mendoza, snatching the paper out of Mr Carpe's hand. 'You read so slow. The man of the future—the man of the future! Where is it, where is it? Oh, I see.' He paced up and down exultantly, reading disconnectedly from the paper. '"No 'appier 'it could 'ave been made than the member for Birchester's application of 'Orace's famous lines"—Oh, 'ang it! Foreign languages. Why don't they put it in English? Who's 'Orace when he's at 'ome? Never 'eard of 'im. I'd arsk Carpe, only Mr St Maur 'd be sure to say

something nasty. "No 'appier 'it." Bravo, Raphe, bravo !
Ha, ha, ha !'

While Moses Mendoza was thus engaged Vivian said to Mr Carpe, 'Here's a letter for you. Gertrude brought it.' An angry exclamation escaped from Mr Carpe when he read the letter, which he crumpled in his hand. 'Bad news ?' Mr Carpe did not answer, but hurried to the tape ; Vivian followed him. 'What does the panic spell for old Moses ?'

'If it lasts another day,' replied Mr Carpe, very white in the face, 'it spells ruin for him—and for me !'

'He will not be able to keep you as his secretary. Is that what you mean ?'

'That—and worse.'

'You've been plunging.'

'I have,' said Mr Carpe, moodily, biting his nails, 'and you're in the same boat, my lad.'

'The top of the tree,' said Moses Mendoza, lost in dreams. 'My boy Raphe at the top of the tree ! The man of the future ! Ha, ha, ha ! Sent for by the Queen—sleeping at Windsor ! My boy Raphe ! My boy Raphe !'

And while he mused and dreamed the clicking of the tape continued, with its disastrous news of the panic that was raging in the city.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FOUND!

AN hour after midnight Moses Mendoza stood alone outside the precincts of the House of Commons. The debate was over, and the division had taken place. The forecasts of the result were verified. By a majority of forty-six the Vote of Censure was carried, and the Government was defeated.

It had been the most exciting night in Moses Mendoza's life. With swelling heart he had witnessed his son's victory, had seen him surrounded by exultant members of the Opposition, and congratulated even by members of the Ministry which could no longer be said to have an existence. For, happily, English politics are devoid of that frantic and hysterical acrimony which leads to disgraceful scenes of physical violence in the Parliaments of other nations, and the hand of generous appreciation is held out to the victor by friend and foe alike.

The earl and Lady Julia had been in the House, and had driven home with Raphael. The gentlemen had pressed Moses Mendoza to accompany them, but he had declined. He preferred a walk in the fresh air to a drive in a carriage after the feverish excitement of the scene he had witnessed, but that was not his reason for refusing. Julia's attitude towards him in the morning at the presentation of the testimonial from the Patriotic League had forced itself upon his attention; he had looked for some word of congratulation

from her, and had hoped for it, but she had not given him so much as a glance. For the first time since he had known her a suspicion crept into his mind that his society was disagreeable to her. It was merely a suspicion, but he acted upon it, and inwardly decided not to intrude himself upon her at such a time as this, when his presence might deter her from speaking freely to Raphael. He had had a few moments apart with his son in the courtyard of Westminster, and what had passed between them had satisfied him. Each knew that he was secure in the other's love.

'Good-night, my dear boy.'

'Good-night, dear father. I hope you are pleased with me.'

'My heart's running over, Raphe. God bless you, Raphe! God bless you! Get along—Julia's waiting for you.'

The grave men walking this way and that at a little distance would have been surprised had they seen those two kiss each other, and heard the sob of joy to which the father gave utterance as he ran away from his son.

So here was Moses Mendoza strolling over Westminster Bridge, with the intention of strolling back when he reached the end, and taking a hansom home.

Usually he was keenly observant of signs of poverty and distress, especially when he was walking late at night in quiet places such as this, where misery that seems to hide itself by day creeps from its lairs and shows itself; but so absorbed was he now in thoughts of his son, and so overcharged was his heart in dreams of the future that he took no notice of the few persons that crossed or lingered on the bridge. Thus he passed, without observing her, a girl who was leaning over the stone parapet looking down upon the river. So motionless did she stand that she might have been asleep. Wrapt in his musings, he stopped a few yards from where she stood, and stood gazing at the light of lamps and stars reflected in the waters. The lights in the

river shone brightly on its surface and penetrated to its depths, where they shifted and changed in form with the play and swell of waters. The gazer's eyes followed them abstractedly, now to the depths, and now far away, where they were lost in shadow, and followed them so fixedly that it might have been supposed he drew some meaning from them in unison with his thoughts.

The peace of night harmonised with his mood. The victory his son had gained seemed to be the end of a chapter in his life. To-morrow a new chapter would be commenced. It was so when he sent Raphael to Mr Septimus Gray's school; it was so when the lad went to Oxford; it was so when he left it; it was so when he married Lady Julia. At the head of each chapter stood one luminous word: Honour; and each was a part of the book the most important chapters in which had yet to be written.

'My dear boy!' he murmured. 'My dear, dear Raphe!'

That thought was the blood of his life. His dear boy! His dear, dear Raphe!

A hand upon his shoulder aroused him from his abstraction. He looked up, and saw Mr Rowbottom standing by his side. The officer shook his head in reproof.

'Can't cure you of bad habits, Mr Mendoza,' he said. 'What are you doing here at this time of night?'

'Thinking, Mr Rowbottom, thinking, thinking. I only left the 'Ouse of Commons a few minutes ago, and I come upon the bridge to think. It's been a great night for my son.'

'I shall be getting ahead of the morning papers,' said Mr Rowbottom, 'if you'll tell me if the Government's out or in. And do you mind, sir, while we talk, walking along with me? I don't want to lose sight of that woman.'

They strolled on slowly, accommodating their pace to the pace of the woman they were following.

'The Government's out, Mr Rowbottom.'

'And a good job, too. If your son gets into office there'll be a chance of our being governed with a little less red tape. So much money saved to the country. If we could buy it at a fair market price it wouldn't matter much ; but when it costs hundreds of pounds a yard, the less we have of it the better. What's the matter, sir?'

'Don't I know that woman?'

'Yes, sir, it's Mrs Mayfield.'

'What is she doing out at this time of the night?'

'Looking for her daughter, as she's been doing every night since she came to London. You commissioned me to look after her and see that she came to no harm, and I've done it and am doing it. But she's a handful. She's as grateful as a woman can be, and is never done talking of your kindness, but as to being led or taking advice, you might as well talk to a goat. Out she will go night after night, and there's no stopping her. She'll go on searching for her girl till she finds her or drops down dead. It's as much as two men can do to keep her from coming to harm. That's what mothers are, God love 'em ! She picks out the most dangerous places to go into ; forces herself in ; and if it wasn't for me and the other officer you commissioned me to engage I wouldn't answer for her life. She doesn't know the meaning of fear. I've argued with her by the hour, and she only shakes her head. "I must find my child," she says. "Something tells me I shall find her before I die." What are you going to do with a woman like that? The danger is, that some of the women she stops get savage with her ; some have men with them—bullies, you know—who don't want a woman like that to interfere with their trade ; and more than once she'd have been struck, and struck hard, if we hadn't stepped between. Now, sir,' he said, after a pause, 'I'll tell you what I know about her daughter Jenny. I hoped to lay hands on her

before now, but she slipped through my fingers. Jenny's not an uncommon name—wait a minute, sir.'

A man who pretended to be drunk lurched against the poor woman, and was whining for alms. Mr Rowbottom seized him by the collar, and sent him sprawling into the road. He rose quickly to his feet, and began to bluster when Mr Rowbottom blew a whistle. A policeman made his appearance from the opposite side of the road, and the blackguard was off like a shot.

'That's a mild taste of what happens,' said Mr Rowbottom, rejoining Moses Mendoza, 'and it shows you that she needs a protector. Pretty well all the men in the force know me, and a good many know her, and that also is a bit of a safeguard. As I was saying, sir, Jenny's not an uncommon name, and by that, and a likeness of her that Mrs Mayfield showed me, I got on the track of her, and got to know where she lived. I lost no time in going there, you may be sure of that. When I called the first time—two weeks ago—she was out, and the inquiries I made about her satisfied me that I had found her. There was the name, Jenny, and there was the description of her, in her own mother's words—the colour of her hair and eyes, her age, her height, and so forth. They did not know her by any other name than Jenny, and I didn't think that a good sign. Now, would you believe it, sir?' asked the detective. 'The second time I called she was gone. She had heard when she came home the night before that a strange man had been asking questions about her, and she made herself scarce. She hadn't even slept in her room. Scuttled away like a frightened rabbit. I did the next best thing to laying hands on her—found out as much about her as I could from this and that one. The one who told me most was a girl no older than Jenny and no better than she should be. Well, I'm not going to throw stones at her. She'd been deceived, as Jenny had been. For there was no doubt

about that part of her story. It came out only too clearly, and was what I suspected. "What's going to become of her I don't know," said the girl who told me the most. (But *I* did, sir.) "She's that poor that she can't pay for her grub. It's my belief"—(I'm telling you the girl's own words, Mr Mendoza)—"It's my belief she hasn't had a good square meal for a month. She's got no more clothes than she stands upright in, and she hasn't got a blessed thing she could raise sixpence on." "But who pays the rent?" I asked. "Her gentleman friend should, but don't," the girl said. "He's a month behind, and if Jenny hadn't run away she'd have been turned into the streets to-day. I'm sorry for her; she isn't like me; I take it soft"—(God help you! I thought, when she spoke like that)—"but Jenny takes it hard. She's crying half the time, and starving the other. I ask her what's the use of blubbering over it, and she bursts out again. Perhaps it is because she's got a mother somewhere in the country—she won't tell me where. My mother's dead, I'm happy to say." I asked if she knew the gentleman's name, and she said Jenny told her it was Shepherd. It's a hundred to one it's a false name. I make no doubt that he told Jenny always to run away from places where questions were being asked about her, his reason being that people who were curious about her would be likely to be curious about him. I don't like the look of the case, and I'm afraid it's a poor lookout for that poor woman before us. But she'll go on, sir, she'll go on till she drops. There's hardly a foul spot in London, from Piccadilly and Regent Street—the foulest of them all—downwards that she hasn't wandered about in from the fall of night till the break of morning; the sights she must have seen in the parks and bridges would fill a book. But I doubt if she'll ever find Jenny now.'

'Don't say that, don't say that,' said Moses Mendoza, earnestly. 'The search mustn't be given up.'

'It won't be, sir, so long as you tell us to go on. I can only hope your money won't be wasted.'

'What do you think 'as become of the poor girl, Mr Rowbottom?'

The officer pressed his lips tight, and turned his head in the direction of the bridge, which now lay behind them. Moses Mendoza shivered; he also thought of the silent river flowing through the arches. Mr Rowbottom put his thought in words.

'It would be better than the other thing, sir.'

They had followed Ellen Mayfield Kennington way, and in her sad quest she had peered into the face of every female that crossed her. Presently she turned back to the bridge again, and as they entered it from the south side the bells of Westminster tolled the hour of two. Slowly they walked on till they came to the spot upon which the girl was standing. She had not moved from her position, but her arms were hanging over the parapet, and her face was hidden on them. Ellen Mayfield must have passed her, as she crossed the bridge, without observing her; and now she passed her again.

'I've 'arf an idea,' said Moses Mendoza, 'that that poor creature was there before you come up to me. It's a 'ard bed for 'er. Couldn't we find 'er a better?'

'Hold hard a bit,' said Mr Rowbottom, as Moses Mendoza was about to step to the sleeper's side.

Ellen Mayfield had suddenly turned, and was approaching the girl. They watched in silence. She put her hand on the girl's arm; the girl did not move. Then she stooped swiftly, and lifted the girl's head. A piercing scream from the mother's lips rung out upon the air.

'Jenny! Oh, Jenny!'

'Found,' said Mr Rowbottom.

Panel the Fourth.—The Fall of Moses Mendoza

CHAPTER XXIX

MR CARPE UNBOSOMS HIMSELF

THE curtain rises upon a different scene, and a wonderful change has taken place in the fortunes of the principal actors in our drama. The first day of November vindicates the character of the month it heralds by a premonitory touch of fog, which clears away, however, by noon. Feeble gleams of sunshine flicker upon the windows of a room on the second floor of a humble house in Bishopsgate, in which two of our friends, the Earl of Lynwood, and Mr Carpe, erstwhile secretary to Moses Mendoza, are conversing. Mr Carpe's face wears a lugubrious expression, as who should say, 'And has it come to this?' The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, have melted into thin air. The Earl of Lynwood's countenance is fairly cheerful, as of a man who finds consolation in the reflection that he has done his duty.

The collapse of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company was sharp and decisive. The forest, the mines, the company, are in the hands of the creditors of the estate. Humpty Dumpty has had a great fall, and not all the king's horses and all the king's men shall ever succeed in setting him up again.

Here was a theme for the free lances of the Press, for all the scribblers, and for grave editors as well ; also for rival speculators, who slyly rubbed their hands and hunted about for crumbs of spoil. Homilies were preached upon the name of Moses Mendoza, abuse was showered upon it, morals drawn from it. A music-hall song was written on it, but strange to say, when it was sung and the audience were requested to join in the chorus, a vigorous storm of hisses proceeded from pit and gallery. The stalls met this with loud applause, and there was a battle of voices, which ended in the victory of those who paid sixpences and shillings for their seats. 'I think, Mr Brazenlung,' said the music-hall manager to the vocalist, 'it will be best not to sing the song again.' A week afterwards it was withdrawn from the programme. Moses Mendoza's name was adored by the poorer classes, but they have not the ear of the Press, and though defenders stepped forward, and recounted his public services and his private deeds of charity, the howlers continued to howl. Society talked of it in the streets, in its homes, in its churches and synagogues. What is so agreeable to society as the gentle titillation of the sensory nerves and the serving up of a dish of scandal? So natural! Society would lose its best spice if scandal were tabooed. Moralists who held shares in music-halls and racecourses and breweries rejoiced that pride had had a fall.

Now, a fall is sometimes fatal, and seldom is it that it does not bruise. But here the wonder grew, for Moses Mendoza picked himself up with a smile on his face, with a good-humoured word on his lips. To all the abuse heaped upon him, and to the various constructions placed upon his attitude, his only reply was,—

'Let 'em 'owl, let 'em 'owl. It pleases them, and don't 'urt me.'

This brief synopsis of the state of affairs brings us to the

The Pride of Race

morning of the first day of November, when the Earl of Lynwood and Mr Carpe sat conversing in the humble room in Bishopsgate.

'Without entering upon details, Mr Carpe, for which I have no head,' said the earl, gazing rather helplessly upon an array of figures on several sheets of foolscap, 'I gather from your explanation of the figures, which present themselves to me as a conglomeration of—ha, hum!—confused labyrinths, that the assets of the estate fall short of the liabilities by a sum of—ha, hum!—close upon four hundred thousand pounds. If by some fortunate means, of which I see not the slightest prospect, that sum could be provided, the estate would pay twenty shillings in the pound.'

'That is so, my lord.'

'And that, as it stands at present, the creditors will receive sixteen shillings in the pound.'

'Yes, my lord,' answered Mr Carpe.

'It would have been a great satisfaction if we could have paid the—ha, hum!—twenty shillings—'

'If Mr Mendoza could have paid it, you mean, my lord.'

'I do not, Mr Carpe. I mean if we could have paid it. I am responsible equally with Mr Mendoza for what is owing, and for the balance of liability that remains.'

'Your lordship can take what view of it you please, but I humbly submit there is but one right view. You are absolutely absolved from liability. It is Mr Moses Mendoza's view—it is the creditors' view—it is the whole world's view. The entire responsibility rests upon Mr Moses Mendoza's shoulders.'

'It does not,' said the earl, with great dignity. 'I have on previous occasions expressed my mind to you upon the subject. I adhere to it, emphatically adhere to it. I decline to be—ha, hum!—absolved. Nothing but the payment of twenty shillings in the pound can absolve me. The creditors have the right to their twenty shillings, and it

would be a happiness to me to give it to them. Meanwhile, it would reflect shame upon me to live in any kind of luxury. Upon my honour, Mr Carpe, if I knew of any kind of—ha, hum!—employment for which I were fitted, and could obtain it, I would accept it in order that I might earn a few shillings a week, and so help to pay our creditors in full—ha, hum!’ The humour of the suggestion that he might by this means be enabled to hand over four hundred thousand pounds to the creditors seemed to strike him, and a smile came to his lips; in another moment he was his old dignified self again. ‘That is why I am here, Mr Carpe—that is why I insisted upon handing over everything of value I possessed, except one or two trifling things which you have been good enough to take to the—ha, hum!—to dispose of for me.’

‘It is to be regretted, my lord, that you did not retain your jewellery and your balance at the bank.’

‘It is not to be regretted. I am aware that the lawyers wished me to retain them, and that they regarded my proceedings as in some sense—ha, hum!—quixotic. They expressed themselves to me to that effect; they stated that there was no legal obligation upon me to act as I have done. I regard it differently; I distinctly refuse to be protected by a legal quibble. There is but one code of honour that I can recognise, and you will oblige me by no longer discussing the personal aspect of the affair so far as it affects myself.’

‘I am at your lordship’s orders.’

‘There is one thing that gives me much pleasure,’ pursued the earl. ‘So far as has been possible, none of the innocent people who, on the strength of my name and that of Mr Moses Mendoza, invested in a few shares, have been allowed to suffer. It has been a difficult task, but it is happily accomplished; and if in future any other claims of a similar nature are made upon me I shall cheerfully

acknowledge them, and I have not the slightest doubt Mr Mendoza will do the same. What do people in the City say as to the payment of sixteen shillings in the pound?’

‘They are greatly surprised, my lord. With liabilities so immense they regard it as eminently satisfactory—as I do myself—and as exceedingly liberal.’

‘And the creditors?’

‘Now you touch a sore point, my lord. I am bound to tell you that the creditors are not inclined to be friendly.’

‘I regret to hear it, but perhaps we could scarcely expect them to be. There are still four shillings in the pound due to them. Does their unfriendliness take any particular form?’

‘It does, my lord. They are deeply incensed against Mr Moses Mendoza.’

‘But why against him? He has done all he could.’

‘That is not their opinion. Frankly speaking, it is their belief that he has not made a full disclosure.’

‘Not made a full disclosure! What do they mean?’

‘Your lordship is not well posted up in certain aspects of commercial matters when traders are insolvent or become bankrupt. I could give you the names of persons whose affairs are in the bankruptcy court, but who, nevertheless, go on living in splendour and luxury.’

‘Is that possible?’

‘It is true, my lord; and there have been several instances in which a wealthy man who owes hundreds of thousands of pounds has, with the aid of a sharp lawyer, made a laughing-stock of justice.’

‘But surely, Mr Carpe, they do not suspect Mr Moses Mendoza of such dishonesty?’

‘Some of his creditors, my lord, believe that he has money and property concealed.’

‘They do him a great, a monstrous injustice, and I should be pleased at the opportunity of telling them so to their

faces. He has given up everything, to the uttermost farthing, Mr Carpe, and is as—ha, hum!—poor as I am. They might as well accuse me of robbing them.'

'Oh, no, my lord, that is quite another matter.'

'On my honour it is not. When they traduce him, they traduce me. He is not the man to defend himself; he takes things too good-humouredly, and has not an ill-natured word to say of man or woman; it is for me, then, to defend him, and I will do so—I will do so! I should do no less for him who did so much for me. I am infinitely more responsible than he for the unfortunate direction affairs have taken, for Lynwood Forest was mine, and I honestly believed, as did my forefathers, that it was rich in minerals.' He had risen to his feet, and spoke in great agitation. 'Did I gather from you that an important meeting of the creditors was to be held to-day?'

'Yes, my lord, at twelve o'clock.'

'It is past that,' said the earl, putting his hand to his waistcoat to take out the watch that was not there. 'Ha, hum!—I forgot. I wish I could have been present to defend Mr Mendoza, and to bring them to a sense of the wrong they are doing him.'

'They would not admit you, my lord. It is an exceedingly strange thing that they refused Mr Moses Mendoza permission to attend.'

'What is their reason for that?'

'I cannot say, my lord. Something secret is going on that I do not understand.'

'Something secret! They have no right to have anything secret. It is not our wish. All the world should know what is going on. We have nothing to hide—nothing!'

'I would not agitate myself, my lord. Perhaps everything will be settled to-day.'

'I thank you, Mr Carpe. I will take a lesson from my

friend, and preserve my good temper. Mr Carpe, I sympathise with you. You, also, have had a bad tumble.'

'A very bad tumble, my lord,' groaned Mr Carpe. 'Such a come-down! Such a frightful come-down!'

'I am truly sorry for you. But we must keep up our spirits. By the way, did you succeed in raising that small loan upon the security of—ha, hum!'

'I could only get half a sovereign on it, my lord.'

'Better than nothing, Mr Carpe,' said the earl, brightly, putting the half-sovereign into his purse, 'better than nothing. My purse was empty. The situation has all the charm of novelty. I am extremely obliged to you.'

'My lord, you are welcome. I only wish—but of what use is it to wish?'

'Your kind intentions are appreciated, Mr Carpe.'

'I trust you are comfortable here, my lord.'

'Quite comfortable, I thank you.'

'Being able to keep only one servant, where formerly I kept three,' said Mr Carpe, in a doleful voice——

'Say no more, say no more. Everything is very nice; I could desire nothing better. Miss Carpe—a charming young lady—is good enough to—ha, hum!—look after my linen, and insists upon doing my—ha, hum!—darning, which I greatly doubt if I could accomplish myself. I had one trial with the needle, and the result was—ha, hum!—ludicrous.' He laughed gently. 'I see you are impatient to get away.'

'I am all anxiety, my lord, to hear the result of the meeting.'

'Go, go, Mr Carpe, and bring back good news.'

'Good morning, my lord. If you want anything in my absence, pray ring the bell for the domestic.'

'I will, I will. In point of fact, I have sent her out for something for my lunch, and I expect her back every minute. Good morning, Mr Carpe.'

CHAPTER XXX

'MELIA-JANE GIVES THE EARL OF LYNWOOD A LESSON IN DOMESTIC ECONOMY

THE first thing the Earl of Lynwood did when he was alone was to rub his forehead slowly and softly with two fingers, either to tone the creases down or to assist the process of ratiocination; the next thing, to caress his chin with the tips of all the fingers and thumb of his right hand; the next, to smile in answer to a thought; the next, to straighten himself and pull himself together; the next, to go to a cupboard in a corner of the room, open it, and take therefrom several pieces of crockery, and place them on the table; the next, to gaze at them until some kind of geometrical design presented itself to his mind's eye; the next, to arrange the crockery in accordance with the geometrical design; the next, to bring a cut loaf of bread, a plate of butter, and knives and forks from the aforesaid cupboard and lay them on the table in the wrong places; the next, to give serious attention to the knife and fork, the perplexing question to solve being whether the fork should be on the right or the left of the plate; the next, to soliloquise.

'For a nobleman who can trace his pedigree back to William the Conqueror, this—ha, hum!—is an experience.' He went again to the cupboard, and from its ground floor brought forward a frying-pan, which he contemplated with a whimsical smile. 'In strictly aristocratic circles it would, I suppose, be considered *infra dig.* for a member of the House

of Lords to cook a rasher for his lunch. I am not quite sure whether I know exactly what a rasher is. Why "rasher"? Whence the derivation? Another question is, whether it is cooked in a frying-pan or a saucepan. Mr Mendoza could doubtless enlighten me; there is nothing he doesn't know. When I think of his wide knowledge of things and my own exceedingly limited range, I am really ashamed of myself.' A knock at the door and the immediate turning of the handle caused him to cry, 'A visitor!' and to hide the frying-pan behind his back in alarm. There entered a typical London slavey, carrying in her hand an article of food wrapped in a piece of newspaper. Greatly relieved, he said, 'Melia-Jane! Thank Heaven!'

'I've brought the rasher, my lordship,' said 'Melia-Jane, placing it on the table.

'Oh, the rasher,' said the earl.

'Cost a penny three-farthings. 'Ere's yer change, my lordship. Yer give me a tanner; fourpence farthing out.'

The frying-pan being behind his back in his right hand, he received the change in his left, and gazed at the farthing with much curiosity. It was the first farthing he had ever seen.

'Would you greatly oblige me, 'Melia-Jane, by taking the rasher out of the paper?'

'Certingly, my lordship. 'Appy to oblige.' She removed the wrapper, and pointed admiringly to her purchase. 'There! A beauty! Beat it if yer can!'

Still holding the frying-pan behind his back, the earl lifted the rasher gingerly, and put it hastily down. 'Melia-Jane offered him a corner of her apron to wipe his fingers on.

'Thank you, 'Melia-Jane. And this is a rasher in its—ha, hum!—uncooked state!'

'Go on!' exclaimed 'Melia-Jane, restraining a desire to give him a friendly nudge. 'As if yer didn't know!'

'Melia-Jane gives the Earl a Lesson 249

'I assure you it is a new acquaintance.' He made a smiling bow to it. 'The introduction gives me much pleasure.'

'E puts it on thick, 'e do,' thought 'Melia-Jane. 'Wot's 'e 'iding 'is 'and be'ind 'is back for?' She stole round, and, seeing the frying-pan, burst out laughing. 'Well, I never did!' she cried.

'For the rasher,' said the earl, solemnly, exhibiting the frying-pan. 'Should it be cooked in a frying-pan?'

'Yer wouldn't cook it in a corfey pot, would yer?' asked 'Melia-Jane.

'Certainly not,' he said with conviction. 'Most certainly not. It would be ridiculous.'

'Ridic'lus ain't no word for it,' said 'Melia-Jane, looking at the crockery on the table. 'Shall I put them things in the cupboard, my lordship?'

'No, my good girl, no. I have just taken them out.'

'Wot for?'

'Can you not see that I have—ha, hum!—laid the table for lunch?' demanded the earl, proud of his achievement.

'Wot! Without a tablecloth! In the suckles you've moved in, my lordship,' said 'Melia-Jane, with a fine sarcasm, 'they do 'ave tablecloths, don't they?'

'It is, I believe, the usual custom.'

'Well, then, why don't yer 'ave one now?'

She took a tablecloth from the cupboard, and proceeded to lay the table properly, while the earl prepared to cook his rasher.

'How should I commence?' he said to himself. 'We have had painful experience that the chimney smokes, and that the soot comes down. The rasher must be protected.'

He put the rasher on a plate, which he covered with another, and then put the two plates on the frying-pan, and the frying-pan on the fire. 'That seems all right. The soot can't get to it.'

The number of 'asides'—that is to say, in the dramatic

sense, remarks made *sotto voce*, which no one except the speaker is supposed to hear, but which everyone does—which 'Melia-Jane usually indulged in was astonishing; and the distinguishing feature in the utterance of these asides was that she took no pains to moderate her voice. Thus, on the present occasion, she said (aside),—

'Is 'e a noble lord, a real live hearl, or is 'e an 'oax? Blest if I don't arsk 'im straight!' (Aloud.) 'Look 'ere'—the earl turned to her—'are you a hearl?'

'Am I a—hearl?' echoed the earl, amusement shining in his eyes. 'My good girl, you mean an earl.'

'No, I don't. Wot's a nearl? I mean a hearl.'

'We will dispense with orthography, 'Melia-Jane. Unless I have been grossly deceived from my birth I am the Earl of Lynwood.'

(Aside.) 'There's a somethink about 'im as strikes ore into yer.' (Aloud.) 'No gammon, yer know!'

'No—ha, hum!—gammon. Upon my word, this young person is very amusing.'

'I've allus 'eerd,' said 'Melia-Jane, drawing from her vast store of literature, 'as 'ow dooks and hearls 'ave got castles and broneyal 'alls.' With a comprehensive sweep of her hands to illimitable skies.

'Usually they have ancestral estates,' observed the earl.

'Ho, that's wot yer call 'em? Where's your'n, my lordship?'

'They are—ha, hum!—where they have been for many centuries. In point of fact, they are not at present in my possession.'

'Wot a shame! Arter being born in them broneyal 'alls all these centcheries yer don't mean to say yer've been done out of 'em!'

'Not exactly. In the vernacular of my friend Mr Moses Mendoza, we have come down in the world. From your appearance I should judge you have met with a similar fate.'

'Melia-Jane gives the Earl a Lesson 251

'Not me! I've never been hup.'

'Hup?'

'Hup.'

'I understand.'

Her doubts not yet resolved, she went to the fire. 'Why, where's the blessed bacon?'

'The blessed bacon, 'Melia-Jane, is between the plates.'

'Melia-Jane held her sides. 'Ho, ho, ho! Is that the way yer cook a rasher? Well, I never did!'

With inward misgivings the earl remarked, 'I infer from your tone that it is not the right way.'

'You cook a rasher!' exclaimed 'Melia-Jane, with contemptuous derision. 'Why, where 'ave yer been brought hup, I'd like to know! Yer can't even cut a slice of bread! Jest look at the loaf.'

The earl looked at the pyramid ruefully, and in a self-condemnatory voice observed,—

'I am afraid my domestic education has been sadly neglected. I am truly ashamed. Yet I can plead in extenuation that until lately I have always had my bread cut for me, and—ha, hum!—buttered. 'Melia-Jane, may I ask you to oblige me?'

He pointed to the frying-pan, and with a courtly bow handed her a fork.

(Aside.) 'E do speak lovely!' (Aloud.) 'My lordship, yer do me proud!' She took the fork from him, and made an elaborate curtsy, which he acknowledged by another courtly bow. (Aside.) 'Nobody but a dook or a hearl could bow like that. Hold as 'e is I wouldn't mind walking hout with 'im.' Attending to the rasher she burnt her fingers. 'Ho!' she cried.

'My poor girl, you have burnt your hand!'

'It ain't of no consequence,' said 'Melia-Jane, blowing on her fingers.

The earl took out his pocket handkerchief. 'Permit me to bind it up for you.'

'Ho, no, my lordship. Jest look at my 'ands—and look at your'n.'

'A study in black and white,' said the smiling earl, wrapping his handkerchief round her hand.

'I could kiss 'im, that I could!' said 'Melia-Jane, returning to the rasher.

'Upon my honour,' remarked the earl, contemplating the willing girl, 'I find among the lower classes sentiments and feelings which would do credit to the best ladies in the land. That girl is a rough diamond. All she needs is a little polishing. I think I hear Mr Mendoza's footstep.'

Mr Mendoza entered the room, carrying in his hand some slices of fried fish and a large pickled Dutch cucumber. He was a little shabbier than when we last saw him, but was no less cheery and jovial.

'Ope you 'aven't been dull, earl,' he said, depositing his parcels on the table.

'Not at all, not at all, Mr Mendoza.'

'A-ha, 'Melia-Jane,' said Moses Mendoza, bestowing a beaming smile upon the kneeling girl; she looked up at him and grinned. 'You look 'ot, my dear.'

'I am 'ot, Mr Mendoza,' she replied.

Moses Mendoza's nostrils expanded. 'It smells a treat.'

'My lunch, Mr Mendoza,' the earl explained, 'which this worthy girl is cooking for me.'

'She's a good sort is 'Melia-Jane,' said Moses Mendoza.

'You're another, Mr Mendoza,' she responded.

'The retort courteous,' observed the earl.

'You're a gal after my own 'eart,' said Moses Mendoza, pinching her cheek.

'Ho, you are a one, Mr Mendoza! And me with the perspiration a-pouring off me!'

Moses Mendoza laughed, and, going to the table, took

'Melia-Jane gives the Earl a Lesson 253

the slices of fish and the cucumber out of the paper, and arranged them on plates. 'While you 'ave your lunch, earl, I'll 'ave my dinner. By my life,' he said, with an admiring glance at the food, 'it looks a pickcher!'

'If I do not mistake, Mr Mendoza,' said the earl, 'that is the celebrated fried fish of your race.'

'It is, earl. There's a friend of mine in Wentworth Street who fries like a queen. She does it for me special. "Mr Mendoza," she says, "I'm proud to fry for you."'

'There, my lordship,' said 'Melia-Jane, serving up the rasher, 'that's the way to cook a rasher. Heat it while it's 'ot.'

'I am extremely obliged to you,' said the earl, taking his purse from his pocket, and from it the half-sovereign he had received from Mr Carpe. 'For your trouble, my good girl.'

'Thank yer, my lordship.' (Aside, looking in astonishment at the half-sovereign.) 'Ho, lor'! A 'arf-sovering!' (Bites it.) 'A good 'un! 'E thinks it's a sixpenny bit. Shall I give it 'im back?' She took a step or two irresolutely to the door, then suddenly wheeled round. 'No, 'Melia-Jane! Yer wouldn't 'ave a wink of sleep!' (Aloud.) 'I beg yer parding, my lordship, yer've made a mistake.'

'Have I?' said the earl, looking up from his plate.

'Yer've give me a 'arf-sovereign instid of a sixpence.'

'There is no mistake, 'Melia-Jane. I knew it was a half-sovereign.'

'Yer did?'

'Yes.'

'And I'm to keep it?'

'Certainly.'

By this, in her estimation, lordly gift 'Melia-Jane's doubts were dispelled.

''E *his* a hearl!' she said aside.

'She does *not* need polishing,' said the earl to himself.

'If 'e'd only give me another bow I'd die 'appy,' said 'Melia-Jane, walking to the door.

'Shake 'ands, my dear,' said Moses Mendoza, rising from the table.

'Thank yer, Mr Mendozy,' said 'Melia-Jane, and left the room with sighs of happiness.

CHAPTER XXXI

FALSE FRIENDS—PUPPETS OF FASHION

'ALTHOUGH I am a poor judge,' said the earl, as the friends proceeded with their meal, 'this rasher is cooked to perfection.'

'Is it tasty, is it tasty?' asked Moses Mendoza, pointing with his fork to the earl's dish.

'There is an appetising flavour in it. I trust your fish is to your liking.'

'Couldn't be more so.'

The earl was suddenly seized with a fit of remorse; he laid down his knife and fork. 'Mr Mendoza, I trust you will forgive me.'

'What for—what for?'

'For sitting at the same table with you, and eating food that comes from the—ha, hum!—pig. Pardon the allusion.'

'No offence, earl. Orfen 'ad it thrown in my teeth.'

'Your people do not eat—ah, hum!—eat pork.'

'Oh, don't they, though?' said Moses Mendoza, and hastily corrected himself. 'No, of course not, of course not. That is to say, some of 'em do, and some of 'em don't. It's a bit awkward, earl, when you mix with people. When you're in Rome, you know—'

'Yes, yes,' said the earl, and deemed it wise to change the subject. 'You have been to the City this morning.'

'Just come from there.'

'Mr Carpe informed me that a meeting of our creditors was to take place at twelve o'clock.'

'Of my creditors, earl.'

'Of our creditors, Mr Mendoza. I had to express my feelings on the subject to Mr Carpe, and found it incumbent upon me to say that men of honour do not take advantage of legal quibbles. I understand that you were not at the meeting.'

'No, they shut me out,' said Moses Mendoza, excitedly. 'They'd no business to, but they did. I went to my lawyer, and he said they would not let me in. There was some newspapers on 'is table that he'd been reading, and when I come in he put 'em away in a 'urry. Somethink in 'em about me, I expect.'

'You must not mind what the newspapers say.'

'I don't,' said Moses Mendoza, and there was a little trembling at his lips. 'All I'm afraid of is that they might say something agin Raphe.'

'Even then you must not take it too deeply to heart. In my time I have frequently seen curs barking at lions' heels. They barked at Disraeli's, they barked at Gladstone's. No man is safe from a certain class of scribblers. Shakespeare says something of—ha, hum!—women which might be applied to men. "Be thou pure as ice and chaste as snow thou shalt not escape calumny."'

'It's a pity, ain't it, earl?'

'A great pity. You have no idea, I suppose, what the meeting of creditors was about this morning?'

'No, earl, I 'aven't. I thought everythink was settled. I can't get to the bottom of it.'

'You ought to be able to, if anyone can. You know the world, Mr Mendoza.'

'Ought to. What's your opinion of it?'

'On its knees to you if you're up, no mercy for you if you're down. Life is full of strange adventures.'

'It's a game, earl, and there's only one way to play it. You get knocked down and trampled on. Get up and

laugh. You lose every shilling you've got. Walk about and laugh. If you're starving when you meet them as calls theirselves your friends, never show it—laugh in their faces—laugh, laugh, laugh! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

'You are a brave man, Mr Mendoza. You know how to meet reverses.'

'Got to know. I've 'ad a good many dips in the lucky bag, and pulled out a prize every time. All at once I put my 'and in and ketches 'old of a knife that cuts me to the bone.'

'And like the heroes of old you hide your wounds.'

'No use showing 'em, earl, and as for bravery I ain't in it with you. I was born low down, you was born 'igh up. I 'ad nothink to lose, you 'ad everythink. And yet see 'ow you've be'aved in this come-down of ours, and see 'ow you, one of the first noblemen in England, 'ave stuck to me, a common, ignorant man—oh, I know what I am, earl—a common, ignorant man who 'appened to 'ave a streak of luck and knew 'ow to take advantage of it.'

'I should have been a coward to desert you. It would not have been the act of a gentleman.'

'Gentlemen like you don't grow on gooseberry bushes, as my old mother, God rest her soul! used to say. There's many a man who calls 'isself one that, common as I am, I wouldn't change places with.'

'You set me a good example, Mr Mendoza. You presented a bold front to the enemy, and never once showed the white feather. That is what Englishmen do all the world over.'

'I'll tell you what kept me up, earl. When the Lynwood Forest Mining Company come to grief and bust up I said to myself, "My boy Raphe's all right. He's got the estate I bought for 'im, and it brings in a good twelve thousand a year. He's made for life, so what does it matter what 'appens to me? He's in the Government, and 'll mount

'igher and 'igher till he gets to the top of the tree, and if I never set eyes on 'im agin I've done my dooty by 'im, and—and—God bless 'im all the days of 'is life !'

'Mr Mendoza,' said the earl, 'I am proud of your friendship.'

'Not so proud as I am of yourn, earl. And I thought of another thing. Says I to myself, "Earl Lynwood's gal, my Raphe's wife, she's all right. She's got 'er settlements, and no one but herself can touch 'er money." So let the young 'uns enjoy themselves, and us old 'uns 'll take a back seat and look on. That's right, ain't it, earl? We've had our innings, and we'll take a back seat, and—and—' He almost broke down here, but pulled himself up and laughed half hysterically as 'Melia-Jane entered the room—'Ha, ha, ha! Laugh, my dear, laugh! Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha ha!'

'Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho, ho!' laughed 'Melia-Jane, unable to resist; and the two laughed on together, while the earl looked on with a grave face. 'Wot a reg'lar one you are, Mr Mendoza! Ho, ho, ho! My sides ache that bad—But 'ere—I ain't got no time for laughing, I ain't!' And continuing to laugh at intervals, she tucked up her sleeves and began to wash up the crockery.

'Can I assist you?' asked the earl.

'No, my lordship,' she replied, 'you've got no call to demean yerself, and it do make the skin that rough! 'Ere, Mr Mendoza, you lend us a 'and, will yer?'

'Glad to, my dear,' said Moses Mendoza, and set to work as if he had been born to it.

'That's yer sort,' said 'Melia-Jane.

But the earl, seemingly regarding it as reflecting upon his manhood that he should be idle while the others were doing the domestic work of the establishment, would not be denied. He failed at the first chapter, for taking up a greasy plate it slipped to the ground.

'A-ha, butter fingers!' cried 'Melia-Jane, picking up the pieces.

'I am truly ashamed,' he said, and stooping to assist the girl, their heads knocked smartly together.

'Which is the 'ardest?' asked 'Melia-Jane, rubbing her pate. 'My! That's a rouser!' The remark was not the outcome of the collision of heads, but was caused by a loud rat-tat-tat at the street door. 'The cove as knocks like that don't think no small beer of 'isself,' she remarked, running to the window and looking. 'Oh, I say! Blest if there ain't a lot of swells at the door!'

Moses Mendoza stepped to her side, peered out, and turned to the earl. 'Some of our old friends, earl,' he said.

'Coming hup 'ere?' screamed 'Melia-Jane.

'Looks like it.'

'Hup 'ere! And the place in the mess it is!'

The work she did in less than a minute and a half might have been done by a pair of steam hands, for by the time the visitors presented themselves the table was cleared, everything put away, and the room tidied up. Moses Mendoza assisted, and the earl stood helpless with amazement and admiration.

The visitors proved to be Mrs Vayne, Madame Blitz, Sir Philip Bramble, and Lady Martindale and Cupid. 'Melia-Jane stared at the pug as she might have done at a creature that was not of this earth; Cupid was dressed in white and lavender, and 'Melia-Jane's idea was that it was a circus dog, and that the whole party belonged to that entrancing form of entertainment.

'Ah, here you are,' said Mrs Vayne, in a tone of extreme cordiality. 'How do you do? How do you do?' First to the earl, then to Moses Mendoza, with a gracious nod to each of the gentlemen.

The earl drew himself up with an air of dignity. 'Quite well, I thank you,' he said.

'Bloomin'—bloomin',' said Moses Mendoza.

Thereupon ensued an awkward pause.

'We have just come from a wedding,' said Mrs Vayne, all smiles, 'and thought we'd make a friendly call.'

'Very kind of you,' said the earl, coldly.

'To everyone I know I say, "Shall we desert our friends when misfortune overtakes them? Shall we show them the cold shoulder because they are poor? No. It would not be Christian charity."'

'We do so sympathise with you,' said Madame Blitz. 'So sad—so sad!'

'If it were not that Cupid had to attend a wedding,' said Lady Martindale, 'I would have put him in mourning out of sympathy with you.'

'A mark of attention,' said the earl, 'which I fear would not have been appreciated.'

'No,' said Moses Mendoza, with cheerful acquiescence, 'we ain't dead yet. When we are we'll let you know.'

'Melia-Jane smothered a laugh; Mrs Vayne put up her *pince-nez*, and calmly gazed at the girl. There was another awkward pause.

'It was quite an undertaking to get up these stairs,' said the lady. 'When we came to the house, and heard you lived here, it was a shock. . . . I called upon Lady Julia yesterday; she was not at home. I regretted that I did not see her, I should have so liked to condole with her. Dear Lady Julia! We were always the best of friends. . . . I hope you do not regard our visit an intrusion. It was Sir Philip's idea.'

'No,' said Sir Philip. 'Yours.'

'Pardon me. Yours. Sir Philip said, "Let us go and see if we can do something for our friends." I said to him, "But be careful what you say, and how you say it. The Earl of Lynwood is very sensitive, and you are so bluff, so outspoken."'

‘My way,’ said Sir Philip. ‘Never beat about the bush—come straight to the point.’

‘That is all very well, but we must consider people’s feelings. You might tell his lordship what it was you suggested as we came along.’

‘I said I would do my best—can’t say if I should succeed—never commit myself—to get up a subscription for him—’

‘Sir!’ exclaimed the earl, indignantly. ‘You forget to whom you are speaking.’

‘Don’t jump down my throat, my lord!’ said Sir Philip, starting back.

He gave another start, and so did all in the room, at the sound of another prolonged and demonstrative rat-tat-tat at the street door. ‘Melia-Jane ran to the window.

‘Oh, my gracious! If there ain’t a kerridge and pair at the door, and a lady gitting hout, dressed up to the nines! Oh, wot a gwond she’s got on!’

Moses Mendoza went to the window. ‘Lady Julia,’ he said to the earl.

The look with which the earl regarded the visitors was not to be mistaken.

‘Perhaps we had better be going,’ said Mrs Vayne. ‘It has been a delightful visit, fatiguing as the stairs are. So glad to see you looking so well, my lord.’

‘So glad!’ from Madame Blitz.

‘So glad!’ from Lady Martindale. ‘Come, my pet!’

‘Devilish cool reception,’ said Sir Philip, aside to them. ‘Good day, my lord.’

The earl made no response, but looked over Sir Philip’s head. He was glad to escape, nor were his companions sorry, although on Mrs Vayne’s countenance no sign of discomfiture was visible. Those within the room heard her voice on the stairs, a moment after she left the room.

‘My dear Lady Julia, how do you do? Take care of the stairs; they are not very safe. This is a wretched hole,

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is it not? Come to see your dear father-in-law? You will find him inside with the earl. He is just the same as ever—so witty and polished, and amiable! Good day. Hope to see you again soon.'

On the lower landing these insolent and unwelcome visitors met Vivian St Maur.

He had not come with Lady Julia. Passing along the street he had seen her carriage, and heard from the attendant footman that she had just entered the house. He asked the servant who lived there; the man could not inform him. Curious to learn what took her there he also entered, not knowing that Mr Carpe and Gertrude lived in it. He knew that the change in Mr Carpe's circumstances rendered necessary his early removal to a house at a lower rental, but was not aware that the step had been already taken. Mr Carpe and Vivian had not met for the last three or four weeks, and Vivian had no desire for a meeting. Jointly involved in the financial crash, Mr Carpe had called upon Vivian to assist him with funds towards a settlement of the liabilities for which he had made himself responsible. Vivian's response was a flippant confession that he was penniless. This meant ruin to Mr Carpe.

'But,' said Mr Carpe, in the course of his vain appeals, 'surely something could be raised upon the "expectations" to which you have so frequently referred, upon the strength of which I consented to be your banker.'

Vivian's reply was a heartless laugh.

'Inventions?' asked Mr Carpe, and Vivian laughed again.

Only the father's love for his daughter prevented a violent quarrel and a decisive breaking of the relations between Vivian and Gertrude. He wished them to be broken, for he now knew that union with such a man would be the wreck of his daughter's happiness. He hinted as much to her; she would not listen; and all he

could do was to trust to time and her own personal experiences to convince her of her lover's unworthiness. Meanwhile Vivian, taking advantage of the position of affairs, chose to consider the engagement at an end; he took no trouble to declare this to her, and his absence and silence were breaking the girl's heart. On this day Vivian would certainly not have followed Lady Julia into the house had he suspected that Gertrude was an inmate.

'Dear me, Mr St Maur,' said Mrs Vayne to him when they met on the lower landing, 'this is indeed auspicious. Lady Julia has just gone upstairs to see her father and father-in-law. Have you also come to offer your condolences? How very kind of you! We have had a most interesting half-hour with them. Upon my word!'

For Vivian had pushed past her, and was ascending the stairs.

'He follows her like her shadow,' observed Madame Blitz.

'Things are coming to a crisis,' said Mrs Vayne. 'It will not be long before we hear of a scandal. The wonder is that it has been so long concealed.'

With suggestive smiles and glances she and her friends left the house.

So pass these puppets of society out of our story. If women such as they were banished to a land where they could do nothing worse than pull their own reputations to pieces, and soil each other's names with the heartless innuendoes which are the joy of their lives, the world would be the better for it.

CHAPTER XXXII

A PROPOSAL FROM LADY JULIA

VIVIAN ST MAUR ran up the stairs so quickly that he overtook Lady Julia on the landing of the rooms occupied by Moses Mendoza and the earl. She turned at the sound of his footsteps behind her.

'You here, Vivian!'

'I passed through the street by accident, and saw your carriage. You have come to see your father?'

'Yes.'

'Any objection to my presence?'

'No.'

He did not detect a curious restraint in her voice, but it was there.

They entered the room together, 'Melia-Jane opening the door for them. A closer inspection of the visitor's attire caused 'Melia-Jane's eyes to dilate in rapturous admiration. She indulged in one of her too-audible asides.

'My stars! Wot a duck of a 'at! And her frock! Oh, my!'

The earl made no movement towards his daughter, and when she held out her hand to him he took it with grave courtesy, and said,—

'I am glad to see you, Julia.'

She did not offer her hand to Moses Mendoza, nor did he accost her. He stood at a humble distance, his manner no less grave than the earl's. In her admiration of Lady

Julia's costume 'Melia-Jane pushed so far forward as to draw attention upon herself. Lady Julia stared at her, and she returned the disdainful glance with a look of adoration.

'Is the presence of this person necessary?' asked Lady Julia, a question which caused 'Melia-Jane's countenance to assume another kind of expression.

'You can go, my good girl,' said the earl, kindly.

'Thank yer, my lordship. Ho, ain't she proud and 'aughty!'—as, in her progress to the door, Lady Julia drew her skirts aside. Still, adoration was the predominant feeling. 'If I 'ad a frock like that I wouldn't call the queen my aunt,' were her last words.

'Can I speak to you privately?' said Julia to the earl, with a cold glance at Moses Mendoza.

'Am I in the way?' he asked hurriedly.

'Not in my way, Mr Mendoza,' said the earl.

Moses Mendoza waited for a moment; Julia did not speak.

'I'll go—I'll go,' he said. 'Wouldn't disturb you for the world. Can you tell me where to find Raphael, Julia? I've got somethink I'd like to say to 'im.'

She remained silent.

'Mr Mendoza spoke to you,' said the earl, in a tone of severity.

'I do not know where he is,' she said.

'No matter, no matter, my dear,' said Moses Mendoza, good-humouredly. 'He's at the Government ofices, I dare-say, looking after the business of the country. 'Ave you seed 'im to-day, Mr St Maur?'

'No, I have not "seed" him to-day,' replied that gentleman.

Moses Mendoza understood; but he was not disposed to accord to him the indulgence he accorded his daughter-in-law.

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'Aven't you, now?' he said in a bantering tone. 'I call that sing'lar, considering 'ow you stand with 'im. You're 'is secretary, you know, and a nice easy berth you've got of it. I wouldn't mind a billet of the same sort myself, only I ain't been edycated up to it. Now you 'ave—but then you're a gentleman, and I'm—'

'Not.'

'Never pretended to be—never stick *my*-self up—never give *my*-self airs. And as for edycation, earl, I think I told you 'ow I used to find fault with Raphe for spelling sugar without an h. We 'ad a good laugh over it, 'im and me.'

'The letter h question,' said Vivian, caressing his moustache, 'must have been a great trouble to you all your life.'

'Give you my word no trouble at all,' said Moses Mendoza, with a genial chuckle. 'When anything troubles me I drop it.'

'That is plain enough to everyone you speak to,' said Vivian, with studied insolence. 'I daresay now, as things don't seem very flourishing with you, that you could smoke a good cigar.'

'Smoke a good cigar! I could smoke a dozen blooming good cigars.'

'Then here's one for you,' said Vivian, offering his cigar-case.

'Thank you, Mr St Maur, thank you. I never sor such generosity.' Taking a cigar from the case he held it up critically, and then gently broke it to pieces and dropped them at Vivian's feet. 'I'll send up some tea, Julia. My love to you, my dear.'

'My daughter wishes to speak to me in private, Vivian,' said the earl, upon Moses Mendoza's departure.

'Vivian is not a stranger,' said Julia.

'Nor is Mr Moses Mendoza. Vivian, I noticed your behaviour to that gentleman. I do not approve of it.'

'I am sorry to hear it, sir.'

'I regret you should have given me occasion to make the observation. Your attitude towards him has been consistently offensive.'

'I cannot help my feelings, sir.'

'You have no right to deliberately wound the feelings of another person, whoever that person may be. I am at least as good a judge of character as yourself, and in my close association with Mr Mendoza I have discerned in him many—ha, hum!—admirable qualities. I have the greatest esteem for him. No man could bear himself more bravely under misfortune—no man could be more kind, more tender, more considerate. The confidence I reposed in him is unimpaired. He is an honest man.'

'Honest!' sneered Vivian.

'I repeat, sir—honest. In this unfortunate reverse of fortune he has sacrificed everything, given up everything, in the endeavour to pay twenty shillings in the pound. That this desirable result is not accomplished is no fault of his, or mine. Until you can do him justice I desire that you do not express your feelings towards him in my presence.'

'Very good, sir,' said Vivian, sullenly.

'Now, Julia, what have you to say to me?'

'I have come for an answer to my letter.'

'Ha, hum!—to your letter. I have been considering how to reply to it.'

'Surely you do not hesitate!'

'That you have not received an immediate reply implies a certain hesitation. Not as regards my decision, but as to the form in which it shall be announced to you. If I understand aright, your desire is that I shall come and live with you.'

'Yes.'

'Upon that point I have decided.'

'You will come.'

'I observe that you do not extend your hospitality to Mr Moses Mendoza.'

'No, I do not. I have told you what I think of him.'

'Yes, you have. And in terms which helped me to a decision. You say in your letter that you will not receive him on the old footing ; implying, if I am not mistaken, that you do not look upon him as a friend.'

'I never did.'

'You presented a false front to the world.'

'Did I ever disguise my feelings?'

'To me, no ; and I took pains to impress upon you that you were doing him an injustice. Your feelings did you no credit, but I trusted to time to mitigate them, to make you see with a clearer eye. You complained to me that you had made a mistake in your marriage with his son. I was astonished—shocked. It was your voluntary act, and—ha, hum !—irrevocable ; and you visited the consequences of what you chose to think a mistake upon the head of your husband's father. Instead of making the best of a lot which all except yourself considered enviable—which I consider enviable—you made the worst. That a daughter of mine should have nursed her distorted views, not only to her own unhappiness, but to the unhappiness of those with whom she was most closely connected, has occasioned me great grief. It denoted a lack of moral courage—I will not say moral principle, because the Lynwoods, though they may make mistakes, keep their souls clean and pure—especially the women of our name, thank God !—a lack, I say, of moral courage which I deplored to see you exhibit. If yours is an unhappy marriage, it is you who have made it so. It may be'—and here he gave a glance at Vivian—'that you have had continually by your side a counsellor who also holds distorted views, and who has helped to keep alive your unreasonable discontent. As to that I shall say no more at

present, but I charge you to bear it in mind, and to think over what I have said. You will be the happier for it.'

'But you will come, father?'

'Until our affairs are settled,' he said, speaking with decision, 'and we have paid twenty shillings in the pound, I will not leave Mr Moses Mendoza.'

'You have asked me to think,' she pleaded. 'Do *you* think of our name, of our lineage? Is this a proper place for you to live in?'

'It is not—ha, hum!—all I could desire. There are, I am bound to admit, disadvantages, inconveniences, and some comical embarrassments. At the same time there are compensations, and occasionally a—ha, hum!—diverting experience.'

'You accuse me of acting unjustly to Mr Moses Mendoza,' she said passionately. 'Can you forget that it is he who has dragged you down? Have you read what the papers are saying of him—that his downfall is a just retribution, that men of his class are a curse to society?'

'I have read, with indignation, something of the kind, and I should hail the opportunity of giving the writers the lie. If there is any disgrace attaching to Mr Mendoza's position, it is just that I should share it.'

'Disgrace! You—the Earl of Lynwood!'

'My title does not protect me. We have to bear the consequences of our actions. It was I who first spoke to Mr Mendoza of the mines in Lynwood Forest. I believed in them. He asked me if I did so, and I answered in the affirmative. I was too sanguine; I spoke from hearsay, and—ah, hum!—tradition. He did not seek for proof; my simple statement was sufficient. He took my word for more than it was worth; and upon reflection I perceive that it is I, not he, upon whom the responsibility for the mischief done should fall.'

'That is what Mr Mendoza says,' said Vivian, smarting

under the allusions that had been made to him. 'No less than that could have been expected.'

'You are wrong, sir. He takes the entire blame upon himself, and has not uttered one reproachful word. It is due to him that my name has been kept out of the affair. Your sneers at his lack of education and at the rank from which he springs are unworthy of you. On my honour as a gentleman I declare that in my own rank in life I have never met with a spirit so generous and magnanimous.'

'Then you refuse?' said Julia.

'Absolutely. Do not disturb yourself about me, Julia. Mr Carpe does his best to make me comfortable—'

'Mr Carpe!' exclaimed Vivian.'

'Yes, this is his house, into which he is lately moved. Mr Mendoza took these lodgings from him, and in a certain sense I am Mr Mendoza's guest. By the way, Mr Carpe surprised me by the information that you were engaged to his daughter Gertrude.'

Vivian gasped, and for a moment was too confused to speak.

'Is it true?' asked Julia, in a quiet tone.

'Absurd!' exclaimed Vivian, inwardly cursing the ill fortune that had brought him to the house.

'And that you had been engaged for several months,' continued the earl, gazing with marked displeasure at the schemer. 'I fail to understand in what way it is absurd, and what reason Mr Carpe could have had in giving me the information if it were not true. Miss Carpe is a charming young lady. I learn from her father that you have given her an engagement ring; and he furthermore informed me that he suspected you were inclined to—ha, hum!—play the girl false because he had met with a reverse of fortune.'

'Is that also true?' asked Julia, in the same quiet tone.

'It is a ridiculous invention,' he replied. 'Good Heavens!

Cannot a man speak to a girl without its being supposed that he is engaged to her ?'

'Either way,' said the earl, 'Mr Carpe hints at reprisals and exposure. Probably you know better than I do what he means. Exposure is an ugly word. Ah!' he said, turned from the subject by the abrupt entrance of Raphael. 'You look as if you bring news, Raphael.'

'I do,' said Raphael.

'Good news?'

'Good news.'

'About our affairs?'

'Yes, about our affairs. Julia!' he said, and held out his hands.

There was a thoughtful look on her face as she placed her hand in his. Vivian bit his lip; Raphael had not acknowledged his presence.

'I am all anxiety,' said the earl.

'I should like my father to hear,' said Raphael; 'and in good time, here he is.'

For Moses Mendoza had entered the room, mopping his forehead. Raphael pressed his shoulder affectionately.

'Raphe, my boy,' said Moses Mendoza, 'I've been running after you everywhere, and I'm that 'ot! I said, earl, didn't I, that there was somethink going on that I couldn't get to the bottom of?'

'You did, Mr Mendoza.'

'Somethink 'as been going on, but up to now I'm as much in the dark as ever. I go round to my lawyer, and all the satisfaction I get is, "My lips are sealed. You must arsk your son, Mr Raphael; we've promised to leave the explanation to 'im."'

'I extracted that promise from them,' said Raphael.

'He says it is good news,' observed the earl to Moses Mendoza.

'He couldn't bring no other. What is it, Raphe, what is it?'

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'In a moment, father. I wish to speak only before friends.'

There was only one person in the room to whom this remark could apply. Vivian's face grew dark as he said,—

'Are you referring to me?' Raphael gazed steadily at him in silence. He continued: 'He wishes to speak only before friends, Julia. We had better go.' She made no movement. 'This is no place for you.'

'Not where her husband is?' said Raphael.

'She is happy in her husband!' sneered Vivian. 'She looks so!'

'How dare you, sir—how dare you!' exclaimed the earl.

'Let me settle this, earl,' said Moses Mendoza. 'Don't put yourself out. The one to be put out is Mr St Maur. These are my lodgings, and I ain't obliged to keep unpleasant company.' He went to the door and opened it, and with a significant motion of his hand invited Vivian to leave. 'The door's a waiting for you, Mr St Maur.'

'And the lacquey opens it,' retorted Vivian. 'It is about all he's fit for.'

'Better to be good for somethink than good for nothink,' said Moses Mendoza, cheerfully.

'These insults!' cried Vivian, white with rage.

'The door, Mr St Maur, the door,' said Moses Mendoza, persuasively.

'Do you bid me go?' Vivian said, addressing himself to Julia. She did not immediately reply, and he repeated the question in an aggressive tone of defiance to all in the room except herself.

'Yes, go,' she said, but did not look at him.

He laughed contemptuously. 'So—they have bought you over? See what comes of it, and then—repent!'

Moses Mendoza moved away from the door, and he walked slowly towards it.

'There is just another word, Mr St Maur,' said Raphael,

and Vivian stopped and faced him. 'I take this opportunity of informing you that I can no longer afford to keep a secretary. Your salary is paid to the end of the year, so no farther notice is required.'

'Would you condescend to inform me why you give me this piece of interesting information so suddenly?' asked Vivian, superciliously.

'I have already informed you. I can no longer afford to keep a secretary. There is a change in my circumstances.'

'For the worse, I hope.'

'Your hope is realised. For the worse.'

'Delighted to hear it. Delighted, also, to sever my connection with you—you Jew!'

'I wish I could retaliate, Mr St Maur,' said Raphael, quite unmoved, 'by calling you—a Christian.'

'Go, sir, this instant,' said the earl, sternly. 'Your insolence is unbearable.'

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW RAPHAEL'S NEWS WAS RECEIVED

WHITE with anger, and in cowardly dread of the sword that was hanging over his traitorous head, Vivian St Maur was about to pass through the door when his progress was arrested by the appearance of Gertrude Carpe. She was carrying a tea tray, and, with a timid, appealing look at him, stood aside to afford him free egress. He bestowed no glance upon her, but with a muttered curse brushed roughly past her.

The girl's head drooped, and the earl, observing her distress, stepped forward quickly to take the tray from her trembling hands.

'Allow me, Miss Carpe.'

Her woman's pride came to her aid. 'Thank you, my lord,' she said, placing the tray on the table, 'I can manage. Mr Mendoza asked me to make the tea myself, and bring it up to Lady Julia.'

The earl took her hand, and led her to Lady Julia. 'Julia, this is Miss Carpe, to whom I am indebted for many sweet services.'

'We have met before,' said Julia. The gentlemen fell back. 'You know the gentleman who has just left this room?'

'Yes, my lady,' said Gertrude. 'You saw us together once in Mr Mendoza's office.'

'I remember. Have you known him long?'

'A long time, my lady.'

'You and he were good friends.'

'Yes, my lady.'

'Something more than good friends?' Gertrude raised her eyes piteously, then lowered them. 'Yes, I see—something more than that. And now?'

'I cannot say—you saw—he would not speak to me.'

'Why?'

'I do not know, except that we are poor.'

'You love him?'

'I fear I do.'

Julia sighed. 'Love should make a woman happy.'

'It doesn't sometimes. It makes her very, very unhappy.'

'Were you to have been his wife?'

'He asked me.'

'And you consented.'

'Yes.'

'This ring?' said Julia, taking the girl's hand.

'He gave it me, my lady. I ought not to wear it now, I suppose.'

'Your engagement ring?'

'Yes,' said Gertrude, struggling with her tears.

'Don't cry—don't cry! I pity you from my heart. I am very, very sorry for you. All men are false!'

'Oh, no, my lady, oh, no! Not all men!'

'Go now. I will speak to you at another time. Perhaps I can help you—perhaps you can help me!'

'Oh, my lady, do you need help?' asked Gertrude, wondering at the words and the tone in which they were uttered.

'Perhaps as much as you do,' Julia replied. 'Perhaps more—for I am bound, and you are free. And yet'—she paused and looked around, as though the place had suddenly become strange to her—'my heart is torn with doubt—of myself, of everything! Have I been wandering in darkness? Do not answer me. Go, child, go.'

But Gertrude hesitated ; her nature was too gentle for the passionate moods by which Julia was swayed. Despite that he had played her false, despite the painful discovery that the angel she had worshipped had feet of clay, that he was a traitor to her, and perhaps was traitor to other women, she thought of him with pity and tenderness.

‘You will not harm him !’ she said plaintively.

‘No,’ replied Julia, ‘I will not harm him. I have not the power to harm him. It is men who have the power, not women.’

They stood in silence a moment, facing each other ; then Julia stooped, and their lips met. Gertrude’s overcharged heart found relief in tears, and there was a grateful look in her eyes as she left the room.

‘Now, Raphe, we are alone,’ said Moses Mendoza ; ‘what’s the news ? I’m on pins and needles.’

‘It is soon told,’ said Raphael. ‘At the final meeting of creditors this morning—’

‘You was there, you was there !’

‘Yes, I was there, by arrangement.’

‘And they wouldn’t let me in !’ exclaimed Moses Mendoza, helplessly.

‘I don’t think you could have helped us much,’ said Raphael, smiling tenderly. ‘We did very well without you. I am happy to tell you that our affairs—and yours, my lord—are settled.’

‘I am rejoiced to hear it,’ said the earl. ‘With honour, I trust.’

‘With honour—although there still remains an obligation which I hope in the course of time to be able to discharge.’

‘Are all the creditors fully satisfied ?’ asked the earl.

‘They are. There is not a dissenting voice. They even desired me, father, to convey to you a vote of thanks.’

‘Did they ? Then I’m glad I wasn’t there. They’d ’ave kept egging me on to make a speech, and a nice muddle I

should 'ave made of it.' His face beamed as he added, 'It's you that's been interfering, Raphe!'

'Yes, it is I.'

'But 'ow did you manage to satisfy 'em?—and to pass a vote of thanks, too! They'd 'ardly listen to me—bullyragged me right and left—talked of winding me up in the bankruptcy court—as if that 'ad done 'em any good! but I'm glad it didn't come to that—I'm glad they come to their senses. Sixteen shillings in the pound! I call it princely. Why, there's 'ardly a big estate in the country that's ever paid as much as that. When I'd given everythink up, down to my watch and chain, my lawyer told me they ought to allow me twenty or thirty pound a week to live on till it was all settled. But I said "No, I won't take a shilling; Raphe wouldn't like it; he'll give me all I want." It ain't much, Raphe, is it, my boy?'

'No, father. I wished you to take more from me, but you insisted upon having your way.'

'We almost come to words over it, earl, Raphe and me, said Moses Mendoza, in great glee. 'For the first time in our lives we almost quarrelled.' Raphael smilingly shook his head. 'I said "almost," Raphe, "almost." It never could come to "quite" with you and me. You see, earl, I ain't above learning. Taking from Raphe just as much as I could do with in a lodging like this, and not a penny more, was a matter of principle. When I said as much to Raphe, when I said to 'im, "It's a matter of principle, Raphe," and explained what I meant—not in the way he could, because I 'aven't got 'is gift of ora'try—he agreed with me. Now, didn't you, Raphe, my boy, didn't you?'

'Yes, father, I agreed with you.'

Moses Mendoza's face was a picture of happiness. 'So you see, earl, although we "almost" come to words, because of Raphe's goodness to me, there never was any chance of its being "quite." Sixteen shillings in the pound—sixteen

shillings in the pound ! It's enough to make a man proud, when he owes millions.'

'We pay more than sixteen shillings, father,' said Raphael.

'No, no, Raphe, that ain't possible.'

'It has been made possible,' replied Raphael, speaking very quietly. 'Father, my lord, you will be glad to know that we pay twenty shillings in the pound.'

Into the countenance of the earl flashed a look of inexpressible joy—the joy of a man who had been falsely accused and whose innocence was proved and made clear in the eyes of the world. He entertained no doubt of the truth of the statement, for his faith in Raphael was absolute.

'Thank God !' he said, and the deep sigh of relief that escaped him showed how great was the weight that had been lifted from his heart.

Upon Moses Mendoza Raphael's statement produced a different impression. He did not doubt his son's word—that was not possible ; but the expression on his countenance was that of a man to whom the news, so joyfully received by the earl, brought a dread which he feared to put into words.

'In what way was the balance of four shillings provided ?' asked the earl.

'My estate provided it, my lord.'

'Your estate, Raphe, your estate?' cried Moses Mendoza, in great distress of mind. In that brief explanation he saw the confirmation of the fear which oppressed him.

'Or, rather, the estate which you gave me, father, in the days of your prosperity.'

'You don't mean to say you've given that up to the creditors !' His voice trembled ; he beat his hands together.

'I have. The estate is sold, the deeds are signed.'

'But I won't 'ave it, Raphe, I won't 'ave it !' cried Moses Mendoza. 'They shall give it you back agin—they shall, they shall ! You've no business to pay my debts—'

'My dear father, whose debts should I pay, if not yours? I have none of my own, I am happy to say.'

'They sha'n't rob you—they sha'n't! What was the lawyers about that they didn't stop you? The money was yours—yours!'

'And I have used it as it should be used. Not a shilling of it was mine while you owed a shilling. If the honour of my name were at stake would you not do by me as I have done by you?'

'That's different, Raphe, that's different! I'm an old man—'

'And I a young one, and therefore better able to commence the world over again.'

'Commence the world over agin! exclaimed Moses Mendoza, piteously. 'My boy—my Raphe—a beggar 'Ave you sacrificed everythink, Raphe?'

'I have given up all I possessed.'

'All he possessed—all, all! Ain't you got nothink left?'

'Nothing. You worked for me all your life, father. It will be my pride, my pleasure, now to work for you.'

But this brought no consolation to Moses Mendoza; he rocked to and fro in despair.

'It is by the sacrifice of your fortune, Raphael, that you have been enabled to pay our creditors in full,' said the earl.

'Yes, my lord—but I beg you not to call it a sacrifice. It was a duty which it would have been base in me to evade. The performance of it has made me happy. Although I must tell you that even now we are short by thirty thousand pounds, a sum so trivial in comparison with the huge total of our liabilities that the creditors insist upon foregoing it. But I shall not be satisfied until every just claim is discharged to the uttermost farthing, and to this end my life shall be devoted.'

'Thirty thousand pounds!' moaned Moses Mendoza.
'Thirty thousand pounds!'

'Sir,' said the earl, extending his hand, 'it is well done.'

'I thank you, my lord.'

'But you've got your position to keep up, Raphe!' said Moses Mendoza, despairingly. 'Ow are you going to do it without money? You're a M.P., you know—a member of the Government—'

'I laid my hopes at honour's feet,' said Raphael, with tender regret. 'I have resigned.'

'Resigned! Resigned! With all the world a-bowing down to you! Oh, Raphe, Raphe! You don't mean it, my boy—you can't mean it!'

Raphael's hand upon his shoulder calmed him somewhat.

'It has been my constant thought how can I repay my father for his tender care of me, for the love he has lavished upon me, for the opportunities he has given me to make my way in the world'——

'You've thrown 'em away, Raphe—oh, Raphe, you've thrown 'em away!'

'—And to earn the respect of men. There was but one way. I set before me, as on an altar, an image whose spiritual voice ever whispered to me the road to tread.'

'An image, Raphe, an image?' Moses Mendoza said in a gentler tone.

'The image of Honour, which lifts man above sordid desire, which elevates, which purifies, which strengthens. I made it the principle of my life, and I knew that my father desired that it should be so.'

'Why, of course, Raphe, of course!' said Moses Mendoza, looking into his son's face enthralled.

'There came a time when misfortune fell upon him to whom I owed so much, when I heard his name reviled, and accusations as unjust as they were cruel hurled against him. Before me, pure and unsullied, stood the spiritual image I worshipped, and I stretched forth my hands to it,

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and said, "As you are, so shall my father be. Slander shall not touch his name, the finger of reproach shall not be pointed at him. And when the grave closes over him men shall say, There lies an honest man!"

'Oh, Raphe, my son! My son!' cried Moses Mendoza, in a broken voice, his eyes streaming with tears as he held out his arms to the dear one for whom he would cheerfully have shed his heart's best blood.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE VISION

JULIA, who was standing in the background, shaded her eyes with her hand, but through the mists in which her soul had been wandering she also saw a dim, spiritual figure, robed in white, that seemed to gaze upon her with eyes of sorrowful pity. The lips of this white-robed figure were moving, and though no sound except the sobs, now dying away, of Moses Mendoza was heard in the room, she felt the silent words which were issuing from her lips—for the figure was that of a woman.

‘That a daughter of mine should have nursed her distorted views, not only to her own unhappiness, but to the unhappiness of those with whom she was most closely connected, has occasioned me great grief.’

They were her father’s words, and when they were spoken had not fallen unheeded upon her ears, but now they came back to her with redoubled force.

Distorted views! Of her own creating? But whether this were so or not she had adopted them, and had indeed nursed them to her own unhappiness. But it went further than that. She had nursed them to the unhappiness of those with whom she was most closely connected. She had not thought of that. But here in this humble room, where poverty and privation had been deliberately chosen by those nearest to her, the thought forced itself upon her. Her father had been uniformly kind to her. The severest

words he had ever addressed to her had been spoken but a few minutes since. In her childhood, with a crushing weight of inherited debt upon him, he had endeavoured, and during those years with success, to keep from her the sorrowful knowledge of his unhappiness ; and later, when she gradually learned it, he had done all that lay in his power to make her lot easy for her. She repaid him by bringing grief upon him, by compelling him to alienate himself from her and to endure privation in these mean streets rather than live the life of luxury to which she invited him. How was this to be construed now that she was face to face with her soul ?

Again the lips of the white-robed figure moved, again she felt the words that issued from her lips :

‘ It denoted a lack of moral courage—I will not say moral principle, because the Lynwoods, though they make mistakes, keep their souls clean and pure—especially the women of our race, thank God ! ’

She shuddered. Had she kept her soul clean and pure ? In one sense, yes. With the tempter constantly at her side, poisoning her mind, ministering to her bitterness of spirit, painting alluring pictures of a shameful future, she yet had held him off, and had not passed the barrier which guards a woman’s honour. But in the moral sense ? How was she to answer that when she had listened to the man who would have brought disgrace upon her, and whose base character had been exposed within the last hour ? When the mask was torn from his false face she had felt as if she had been a willing partner in his treachery, and shared the humiliation of the exposure. It was no excuse—she acknowledged it now—that she had known him from childhood, that by birth he was of her caste, and held it as a claim upon her. Apart from pride of race, were there not principles of honour which applied to all men and women alike ?

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How did this man to whose specious sophistries she had listened stand when his conduct was contrasted with the conduct of those whom he despised, and upon whom she, in her unreasoning rebellion, had looked down with contempt? No need to search for the answer. It presented itself to her in a clear and convincing light.

Her pride had protected her from the abyss to which he would have conducted her. So far she might be thankful for it, and breathe a prayer of gratitude for her deliverance. But the sting that lay in the words, 'keep their souls clean and pure,' pierced her to the heart, and she could not pluck it out.

Once more the lips of the white-robed figure moved:

'If yours is an unhappy marriage it is you who have made it so.'

No word, no act of her husband and his father had conspired to make it so. It was she, and she alone, who was responsible. How considerate they had been to her, how forbearing, how indulgent! Was it nothing that they should have patiently borne with the indignities she had cast upon them, that they should have refrained from reproaching her, that her husband, since the day on which she had passionately cried to him to set her free, should have been most gentle and kind, and had not shown, by word or look, his sense of the injustice she had done him?

Nay, more—and this at the moment touched her deeply—had he not shown his faith and confidence in her by leaving her entirely free, by putting no restraint upon her movements, nor laying any injunction upon her respecting her intimacy with this or that person? She had been for some time aware that he had not approved of Vivian St Maur, and yet her cousin had been free to come and go at his pleasure and hers, without remonstrance from the master of the house. She thrilled with shame now to think how little sympathy she had evinced in his political career, how

coldly she had listened to the expression of his ambitious hopes, with what indifference she had received the accounts of his victories, and how she, his wife—while all around were singing his praises—had never given him a word of encouragement and approval. His ambition was a noble ambition, his victories were noble victories, and nobly won, but had they been as low and sordid as Vivian St Maur sneeringly declared them to be, and tainted with the self-seeking he ascribed to them, she could not have taken less interest in them. She recalled how, when he was describing in glowing terms what he hoped to accomplish for the nation and the people, he had looked at her, and noting the apathy with which she was listening, had suddenly stopped and plunged into a subject more congenial to her. He must have suffered keenly, for she knew he had loved her, but he made no complaint, nor, seeing latterly how distasteful his attentions were, had he pressed them upon her. Once during this period, upon the occasion of a great night at the opera, where they had a box, he had sent home some flowers for her; other flowers had been sent by Vivian, and she had worn those. From that day he sent her no more flowers. They lived in the same house and ate at the same table, and might have been strangers. No evidences of affection passed between them, not a kiss, not a pressure of the hand, not a cordial smile. It had happened on two or three occasions that, during a silence, she had looked up and seen his eyes fixed upon her face with a grave thoughtfulness in them, but the moment their eyes met he had averted his, chilled by the cold glance she gave him.

Was it possible, after such experiences, that his love could live? She had done her best to kill it. Had she succeeded? Before this day there appeared to be little hope of happiness for her in the future; now there appeared to be none. For even while he had unfolded to his father and hers the measures he had taken to remove every shadow of reproach

from their name, he had not once turned to her, nor had they. She stood in the background as any ordinary person might have done who happened by chance to find herself in their company, and had been allowed to remain—on sufferance. Not the slightest notice had been taken of her by her or Raphael's father; their attention, their interest, the emotions which agitated them, were centred in her husband. She was little better than a stranger in the impressive scene, eloquent as it was with love, with honest pride and self-sacrifice. Raphael's abandonment of his estate and his ambition in the cause of honour, his cheerful acceptance of poverty, came upon her as a surprise. She had not been consulted; he had given her no hint of his intention. Did not this denote that he had lost confidence in her, that his love was dead? What pleasure could there be in the pride of race, in a long line of ancestry, in the association, through the accident of birth, with noble deeds of the past, when all that was sweetest in human life had been so effectually scotched? And by her own hand!

For the last time the white-robed figure spoke with silent voice:

‘Learn from these men whom you have chosen to consider so far beneath you that rank and illustrious descent are valueless when they are not in alliance with worthy deeds, with a life well spent. We live in the present, not in the past, and in the breast of the lowliest man on earth may beat a heart as noble as in that of the prince. Learn the lesson and profit by it—if it be not too late.’

Too late! What bitter sorrow, what poignant remorse, what deeds irrevocable, with their fatal issues, often lie in those simple words!

The vision vanished, and then Julia was conscious that but a few moments could have passed, for Raphael and her father had scarcely moved from their places, and Moses Mendoza, in response to a knock, was opening the door.

CHAPTER XXXV

MR ROWBOTTOM BRINGS A PIECE OF NEWS AND SQUARES UP ACCOUNTS

THE visitor was Mr Rowbottom.

'I've come to square up accounts and tell you a piece of news, Mr Mendoza,' he said, and stopped short upon seeing they were not alone. 'Beg pardon, sir, I didn't know you had company.'

The tears were still in Moses Mendoza's eyes, but he made a successful effort to recover himself.

'Is it about Mrs——' And then he also stopped. 'Some other time, Mr Rowbottom.'

'Well, sir, it's rather awkward. I'm called away into the country all of a sudden, and may be away a month. An important case, sir, and I must square up things before I go. Besides, the affair's finished, and there's nothing more to do. If you could step downstairs with me?'

'There ain't a room in the house that ain't occupied,' said Moses Mendoza, 'and you're in a 'urry, you say.'

'Haven't a minute to spare, sir. If the company wouldn't mind we can get through the business here in a very short time.'

Moses Mendoza looked at the earl, who said, 'By all means proceed with your business, Mr Mendoza. If it is not of a private nature we will wait.'

'It's only about a poor woman and her daughter, earl,' said Moses Mendoza, and glancing at Julia, who was sitting at the table, paused again.

'That Mr Mendoza's been kind to,' said Mr Rowbottom. 'Time presses, sir. We must hurry up.'

'Very well, very well,' said Moses Mendoza. He did not like to ask Julia to retire; she had shown her feelings towards him in a manner so unmistakable that he feared to offend her.

'I've kept a strict account, sir, and here are the figures,' said Mr Rowbottom, producing a penny memorandum book. 'From first to last I've had eighty pounds from you, and there's a matter of three pounds two shillings left. The expenses have been rather heavy. There were the hospital nurses and the doctor to pay, and for some time the poor girl lay between life and death. Then there was the rent; and Mrs Mayfield was to have thirty shillings a week; she's got it to the end of next week; she wouldn't take it for a day longer. I've paid for their railway tickets, and they go home to-morrow. They've got a friend in Holt, who'll give them a room in her cottage till they get a situation. Mrs Mayfield says they'll be able to rub along; she's full of hope and courage, and says there's half a chance of a situation for her and her girl in the same house. Here's the balance, sir.' He handed the money and the memorandum book to Moses Mendoza.

'It ain't much, Mr Rowbottom. I'd like Mrs Mayfield to 'ave it.'

'She won't take it; she's trespassed enough, she says. She'll never forget you, sir, if she lives to a hundred. That night on the bridge! I shall never forget it.'

'Are they pretty well?'

'Mrs Mayfield's fairly well, but it will be long before the girl's herself again. What's weighing upon them, Mr Mendoza, is the London streets; they fairly hate the sight of them, and there won't be much peace for them till they're in the country. The doctor says it is the best place for them. After what the girl's gone through the wonder is that she ever pulled round;

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she wouldn't have lived if her mother hadn't nursed her day and night. The poor woman is a bit troubled that you haven't been to see her.'

'I've 'ad a lot to do, Mr Rowbottom; I've been very busy.'

'I know, sir. You've had your own troubles, and we're all sorry for you. But there, sir, you'll get over them; you're the sort of man *to* get over them. If you could manage to run round and see Mrs Mayfield before she goes to the country she'd be grateful to you.'

'I'll try to.'

'There's something you ought to know before you go, sir.'

'What is it?'

'It's four weeks since you've seen them, and if you came across it in the accounts without being told it might give you a shock.' He opened the memorandum book, and pointed to an item: 'Baby's funeral, £2.' Mr Rowbottom whispered, 'It lived four days, sir. Perhaps it's for the best.'

'Poor thing—poor thing!' sighed Moses Mendoza, and covered his eyes with his hand a moment; then looked around cautiously, and in a voice which an attempt at cheerfulness only made more sad, said, 'And that's all, Mr Rowbottom?'

'Just one thing more, sir. The scoundrel's name.'

'Yes?'

'He passed himself off as Mr Shepherd, you remember, sir, and I told you at the time I believed it to be false. Well, I tracked him, put this and that together, and followed up the scent. His real name is Mr Vivian—'

'Stop!' cried Moses Mendoza; but the earl had stepped forward, and Julia was looking up, horror in her face.

'I could not avoid hearing your last words,' said the

earl. 'You mentioned the name of Vivian, but that is not the full name.' Moses Mendoza held up a warning hand and Mr Rowbottom was silent. 'Pardon me, Mr Mendoza,' continued the earl, 'I have the right to be informed. Give me the full name, sir.'

Mr Rowbottom looked at Moses Mendoza for permission, and did not receive it.

'This is too serious a matter for silence or evasion,' said the earl. 'I insist upon your giving me the man's full name.'

Moses Mendoza turned helplessly aside.

'Mr Vivian St Maur,' said Mr Rowbottom.

'I feared it—I feared it!' said the earl. 'An idle life—a nature inclined to evil. I used to nurse him on my knee!'

His voice was charged with sorrow. Mr Rowbottom gazed at him in surprise, but his own business was too pressing to allow of his remaining any longer. He looked at his watch.

'Just time to catch my train. Good day, Mr Mendoza; I'll take the liberty of looking you up when I return to London. Good day, gentlemen.'

He bowed to Lady Julia, and hurrying downstairs was hailed by three men, one of whom inquired if he could tell them whether Mr Moses Mendoza was at home. Receiving an answer in the affirmative they had a consultation on the landing. One of the men held by the hand a little girl of eleven or twelve. The point under discussion was as to the manner of their entrance.

'All together, or one at a time?' he asked his companions.

'All together,' they replied; and all together they presented themselves to the man they had come to see.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A WATERBURY WATCH

EACH of the men wore a flower in his buttonhole—not a natural product, but made of gauze and paper. The flower was of a peculiar blue colour, unlike any that was ever grown in a garden, but the wearers were proud of the adornment. They were attired in their Sunday clothes, and their appearance betokened that they had come on an errand of some importance. Removing their hats, they stood in a row, the little girl in front and in the middle. She had flaxen hair, her eyes were heavenly blue, and her face betokened that it had first been vigorously scrubbed, and afterwards vigorously polished.

Moses Mendoza knew the men ; they were City cabmen, and he had frequently ridden in their hansoms. That he was a fare to be kindly remembered was made manifest in their respectful greeting.

‘Not wishing to intrude, sir,’ said the elected spokesman of the party, ‘we are here as a deputation.’

Moses Mendoza gasped, and wished the floor would swallow him up.

‘You may recollect us, sir.’ Moses Mendoza nodded faintly. ‘Still, sir,’ continued the spokesman, ‘this being a function which is—a—a—’

‘Which *is* a function,’ suggested one of his comrades.

‘Which,’ said the spokesman, declining the suggestion, and facing about, ‘ain’t exactly in the way of business, let’s

proceed according. To-day we ain't badges, but names. Mr Bly, sir, Mr Thomas Bly.'

Mr Thomas Bly being himself, he took one step forward and bowed ; then fell back into line.

'Mr Jack Willing, sir. Willing by name, willing by nature.'

Mr Jack Willing took one step forward and bowed ; then fell back into line.

'Mr William Torrington, sir. Commonly Bill, but the occasion calls for William, so William it is.'

Mr William Torrington took one step forward and bowed ; then fell back into line.

'Lastly, sir—and best because it's last—Victoria Alexandra Bly, my little girl. Heart's Pride we call her, and well called. My old woman and me had a difference when she was born. She wanted to name her Victoria after the Queen ; I favoured Alexandra, after the Princess. We fought over it with our tongues. Then the old woman had a happy thought, not the only one by many. I don't let on that that's my opinion of her—make her too conceited. "Tom," she says, "why not both ?" And both it was. Blest if it ever entered *my* head. Step forward, Victoria Alexandra, and make the gentleman and the lady over there a pretty curtsy.'

The blue-eyed child stepped forward shyly, and made the prettiest curtsy in the world ; then fell back into line.

Mr Thomas Bly cleared his throat as a preliminary to the object of their visit.

All this was very mysterious, and Moses Mendoza, in a state of trepidation, waited for developments.

'It come about in this way, sir. First and foremost, you've been a good friend to cabby, and a good friend to cabby's young 'uns. You always paid us liberal, and the day's work was jonnick when we picked you up for a fare. Perhaps what touched us up most was what you did for the

kids. The way they looked forward to your summer's day at the seaside, regular every year, and the way they talked of it before and after, is something to remember. There ain't a much better way for a man to spend his money than the way you spent yours. Like a gentleman. It flowed like water. You've lost it. Well, sir, there's few of us that ain't had our ups and downs. May it all come back !'

'Doubled,' said Mr Jack Willing.

'When Jack Willing says doubled, doubled it is,' pursued the orator. 'It ain't only that he's got a good heart, but he's about as fly as they make 'em is Jack ; jolly hard to beat when he's got his nose at the pot.' The men laughed. 'What we all say of Jack is that what he don't know ain't worth learning. We was talking of one thing and another awhile ago, me and my mates, when up comes Jack and joins in. Then we got talking of you, sir, and it come about that we said we'd like to show you in some way that we stood by you in bad fortune as you stood by us in good. Hoping you won't consider it a liberty, sir.'

'Not at all, not at all,' said Moses Mendoza. The familiar vernacular appealed to him and set him at his ease. 'Very kind of you.'

'Kind of you to say so, sir. We talked a lot, but it come to nothing. Why did it come to nothing, sir? Because we couldn't think of nothing. Till Jack said, "Let it bide a bit ; I've got an idea." So we let it bide, and a couple of days afterwards, when we was blowing the froth off, Jack said, "Look here, mates," he says, "I'm blowed if he's got a watch." "How d'you know that?" we asks. "Why, I saw him in Leadenhall Street," says Jack, "and I got down to pay my respects to him, and then, with that idea in my head, I asks him casual-like"—Jack's words, sir, casual-like—"can you tell me the time of day, Mr Mendoza? I'd like to set my watch by your'n, sir ; Greenwich time you always kept." "I'll ask my uncle," says you—perhaps you

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remember it, sir—"I'll ask my uncle," says you, sir, in your good-humoured way. "And I'm blown if he's got a watch," says Jack to us. "What d'you think of our clubbing together, and giving him a Waterbury?" It caught on, sir, and ten of us took the liberty of serbscribing a shilling apiece, and bought a Waterbury watch which Heart's Pride has got in the pocket her mother stitched in her frock this morning. Take it out, Victoria Alexandra, and we hope you'll accept it, sir, and wear it till you get your gold chronometer back again.'

With the assistance of her father the child took the watch from her pocket—with much difficulty, it was such a tight fit—and raising her eyes of heavenly blue to Moses Mendoza's face, shyly held it out to him.

He was greatly affected, and so were the others in the room.

'Mates and friends,' he said, never hesitating for a word, and as he spoke he lifted Victoria Alexandra in his arms and kissed her, 'I take it kind of you, and I thank you from my 'eart. You couldn't 'ave given me anythink that comes closer to me than this. I'll wear it as long as I live, and I wouldn't change it for the best gold chronometer that ever was made. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Earl, what do you think of it? This is the noble Earl of Lynwood, mates.'

'It is one of the most gratifying experiences in my life,' said the earl, 'and is a great pleasure to all of us. If Heart's Pride would give me a kiss I should feel greatly honoured.'

Would she? Would she not? And Raphael kissed her, too, and when he set her down, turned wistfully to Julia. But her arms were outstretched on the table, and her face was hidden on them.

They shook hands all round, and the deputation retired in a state of delighted satisfaction at the success of their mission, the orator carrying Heart's Pride in his arms, and whispering to her that she must never, never forget that she had been kissed by a real live noble lord.

Panel the Fifth.—Light

CHAPTER XXXVII

WINTER

It is pantomime season. Sprightly harlequin, graceful columbine, knavish clown and senile pantaloons are waiting at the wings for the few brief minutes which managerial wisdom accords them for their fooling. Time was when the audience revelled in their antics, rocked its sides, and went home laughing. They ruled the roast, and their appearance was greeted with a roar of welcome. 'One morning very early, My malady was such,' sang the clown, and the audience listened and clapped its hands with a broad grin on its face. To them the honour fell, honour greater even than that of the fairies in the silver glen. Alas! Times are changed. Come, glitter of gold and silver, flashings of burnished helmet and shield, endless processions of Amazons with shapely limbs, come and dazzle the eye and bewilder the mind. It is the age of tinsel. Stripped are the legitimate pantomime drolls of their ancient glories; they are engaged on sufferance, and are barely tolerated; and when their poor gambols are ended, the audience goes home yawning, while poor clown creeps to his bed and wonders what the world is coming to.

It is in other respects to be wondered at, for look where you will, dark clouds meet the eye, and few are the optimists who see the silver lining. Russia stretches out

its paws, and moves slowly and insidiously, inch by inch, towards the goal to which the fingers of dead Czars have pointed for many generations ; France frets and fumes and threatens, eyes glaring, lips foaming, breasts heaving, and voices crying hysterically for revenge for old defeats ; Turkey alternately cringes and defies, with a smiling lie upon its lips ; Uncle Sam winks at the nations and warns them to look out for snakes if they presume too far on his good nature ; Germany stands like a wall, guns and men ready, while it slips its commercial traveller into every crevice ; and our little isle, set in a silver sea, is slowly realising the fact that only by flinging Patronage to the winds and changing the colour of its tape, only by a thorough revision of worn-out systems and a wise and efficient organisation of national defence on land and sea, only by keeping its watch-dogs day and night upon its cliffs, can it protect itself from the enemies who are snapping at its heels.

This was the keynote of a new daily paper, the first number of which appeared in October and became almost immediately popular.

This new daily newspaper bore a curious and unusual title. It was called *The Needle*, and beneath the title was printed in bold type the motto:—

‘Clear in the Eye, Sharp at the Point, and of Excellent Temper.’

It was a reflex of the national character. The motto caught the public fancy, and was quoted far and wide.

But it was not by its motto that the reputation of *The Needle* was so swiftly established, and by which it fixed itself so firmly in the affections of the people. In the first place it gave its readers all the news of the world in a concise and intelligible form. In its telegraphic despatches—as a matter of course we were at war here and there—it did not repeat its information half a dozen times in different columns with

a slight rearrangement of words, and by this means the readers were spared the perplexity of reading the same thing over and over again. It dealt with its information from various sources in paragraphs, each complete in itself, and thus conveyed to the mind an intelligent picture of the course of events. In the second place—and this was its most valuable feature—its leading articles were marvels of sagacity and lucidity. They dealt trenchantly and unsparingly with facts which struck at the roots of vital issues; they pointed out the rotting branches and demanded that they be cut away and healthier branches grafted into the tree. From these facts, in conjunction with the dangers by which the nation was surrounded, such clear and sensible conclusions were drawn that the simplest mind could understand. There was no paltering or indecision in the statement of these conclusions, no loopholes for excuses for the maladministration of public affairs. The editor would not admit excuses for blundering and plundering; the stake at issue was too serious. His language was that of a clear-headed, far-seeing man, who was not to be diverted from his purpose. To a member of a noble family which for a century had been a pluralist in sinecures—capacity for office being the last thing to be considered—and who addressed a supercilious and impertinent letter to the editor of *The Needle*, advising him not to meddle with ‘Privilege,’ he wrote a scathing reply on the question of mischievous privilege, and applied Shakespeare’s words, ‘I tell you, my lord fool, out of this nettle, danger, we pluck the flower, safety.’ When the letters were published my lord fool wished he had not written.

The editor and leading spirit of *The Needle* was Raphael Mendoza, and it was he, and he alone, who was responsible for everything that appeared in its columns.

How it came about that he was at the head of so important an enterprise needs a word of explanation.

Shortly after the final settlement of the affairs of the Lynwood Forest Mining Company he received a letter from Mr Sheldon, a solicitor of repute, asking for an interview on a matter of moment, and on the appointed day the two men met in the solicitor's office.

'On behalf of a client,' said Mr Sheldon, 'I have a proposal to submit to you, which I hope will meet with favourable consideration.' Raphael bent his head. 'My client,' continued Mr Sheldon, 'desires to start a daily newspaper, and wishes to know whether you will undertake it.'

'In what capacity?' asked Raphael.

'In the capacity of editor.'

'And the salary?'

'To be left to you to name.'

'And then to be discussed?'

'No. Whatever salary you name will be granted. I have here a statement of the salaries paid to the editors of four or five of the leading London daily papers. Either of these salaries will be paid to you.'

The sums on the paper he laid before Raphael, with the names of the papers, ranged from fifteen hundred to three thousand pounds per annum.

'It is a wide margin,' observed Raphael. Mr Sheldon assented. 'Is it absolutely left to me?'

'Absolutely.'

'It shows confidence,' said Raphael, 'and I cannot but appreciate it. But it is unusual.'

'Most unusual. My client is an unusual person.'

'What does he say as to the policy of the paper? This should properly have been my first question.'

'My client says nothing. You will decide that.'

'Is there no stipulation that it shall be a Government organ, or the reverse? Has he no policy whatever?'

'None that I am aware of.'

Raphael considered. He had often said that, next to taking

an active part in politics and statesmanship, the position he most coveted would be that of the editor of a daily paper, with a free hand as to its policy. It was a glorious power to wield. And now, suddenly and unexpectedly, such a position was offered to him, and offered in a spirit of liberality and confidence that occasioned him great surprise.

The acceptance of the generous offer was not the only thing to be considered. Here was offered to him not only the position he most desired, but the means towards the accomplishment of the wish nearest to his heart—the payment to the creditors of his father's estate of the thirty thousand pounds which would complete the full dividend of twenty shillings in the pound. He had little doubt that if he stipulated for the highest salary it would be accorded. A sixth of this income would suffice for him and his father; five-sixths could be handed to the creditors. In twelve years the entire sum would be paid off. Twelve years! It was a great slice out of a man's life, but in what better way could it be spent? A man must work to live, and he could not hope to find work more congenial to him. If all went well his father and the Earl of Lynwood would be entirely free from debt by the time he reached his fortieth year.

'The gentleman for whom you are acting is probably acquainted with my political views,' he said.

'Most people are, Mr Mendoza. You were not long in the House, but you made your mark there. Your retirement was the country's loss; but you can serve the country quite as well, perhaps better, as editor of a daily paper. In the House you have to wait your opportunity; in a daily paper you make opportunity. You have not to catch the Speaker's eye; your public is always ready for you; they sit at your feet.'

'Being acquainted with my political views, and willing, in a certain sense, to place himself in my hands, I may take it that his own are in accord with them.'

'You may take it so if you please.'

This being an ambiguous reply, Raphael, somewhat perplexed, asked, 'Has he not told you what his politics are?'

'No.'

'What is his object, then, in wishing to start a new daily?'

'What is the object of most people—I should say all people—when they enter into a speculation?'

'It is purely a speculation, then?'

'You must not press me too closely, Mr Mendoza. I cannot hold myself responsible for the private or political opinions of my client. We will, if you please, speak only of the business view, so far as it affects yourself. You have not yet named the salary.'

'Before doing so I must know something more. Who selects the staff?'

'The editorial staff will be selected by you, and I undertake that you will not be hampered in any way. You will engage and discharge whom you please, and no questions will be asked. Your reporters and sub-editors will be entirely under your control, and you will fix their salaries. What we may call the practical part of the paper, the printing and machining, the book-keeping, the advertisement department, the purchase of paper, etc., will be under the control of a business manager whom I shall appoint. He will have enough to do, and you will have enough to do. It is no light task you will enter upon.'

'I know it; that is why I am asking so many questions, and have still more to ask. I must push the matter a little farther. Being responsible for all that appears in the columns I shall be responsible for the advertisements.'

'Well?'

'There are certain classes of advertisements, those of

racing tipsters and bookmakers, of money-lenders, quack medicine vendors, and some others, to which I have a strong objection.'

'You have only to say they shall not be inserted. My instructions are very comprehensive.'

'Indeed they appear to be so—even to the extent of yielding to me in every objection and stipulation I make,' said Raphael, pondering.

'To every reasonable objection and stipulation. The views you express of a certain class of advertisements are my own. The first object of the paper, I take it, will be to make it attractive and acceptable to a large class of readers. With a large circulation advertisements of a reputable kind will follow as a matter of course. Naturally we look forward to that.'

'Naturally. But has it occurred to you, Mr Sheldon, that I may have an axe to grind?'

'Grind it,' said Mr Sheldon, laconically.

Raphael could not help laughing. 'How about the title?'

'My client has no wish for any particular title.'

'It is a most important matter. Has he mentioned none?'

'None. You see, Mr Mendoza, as you are to dictate the policy of the paper, so you should decide upon the title. It is reasonable to suppose that one will bear relation to the other. Entirely for your consideration and decision. Now let me explain farther. The moment you say you agree to the proposal, I, on my part, shall engage the business manager, who will immediately set to work. The moment you decide upon a title, public announcement of the project will be made in a manner which you will approve. Our desire is that no time be lost. These are stirring times, full of stirring themes. There will be great preliminary expenses, and contracts to

be made with printers, machinists and paper makers. The manager I have in view is a man of immense energy ; he will push the thing forward with vigour. All, of course, depends upon the result. My client is not a millionaire, but is prepared to lose sixty thousand pounds on the venture—perhaps a few thousands more. My belief is that, with you at the helm, the paper will begin to pay its expenses in a couple of months. When that point is reached the scale will turn to the profit side, and there is no saying—there is really no saying—how large the balance will be at the end of a year. Once a property of this kind is established it goes ahead like wildfire, so long as a watchful eye is on it and the paper kept up to the mark. High pressure, of course—we must go with the times. I hope I have expressed myself clearly.'

'Admirably. It appears to me that I am the person responsible for success or failure.'

'To a great extent. May I take it that you believe in the success of the paper?'

'Yes, with so large a capital at its back I believe it will succeed. If I did not I would not undertake it.'

'My client will be gratified to hear your opinion.' Mr Sheldon leaned back in his chair, and seemed to be waiting for a special question, and, without being aware of this, Raphael uttered it.

'What is the name of your generous client, Mr Sheldon? Do I know him?'

'Mr Mendoza,' replied Mr Sheldon, smiling, and interlacing his fingers, 'I am not at present empowered to reveal it. Be satisfied with the affair as it stands. The financial conduct of it is in my hands, and your business will be with me. You will doubtless wish to consult me from time to time ; you will find me always ready. It is at the express desire of my client that I refrain from mentioning names, and in our present negotiations it is really of small importance.

My instructions are so precise and explicit that if you were to ask me whether my client is this or that particular person I should decline to reply one way or another. I am empowered to mention another phase of the affair. Should we be fortunate enough to make the paper a profitable concern there will be no difficulty in your becoming a part proprietor. That is all, I think, except to fix your salary as editor.'

'A moment or two, Mr Sheldon. There are so many strange and unprecedented features in the proposal that I feel I must not give too hasty an answer.'

'You want a little time for consideration. The request is reasonable, and I will leave you, say for a quarter of an hour. Pray do not think me abrupt, or that I wish to unduly hurry you, but I regard it of importance that the matter be settled in this interview. I trust your decision will be what we wish it to be. There are, as you say, strange and unprecedented features in the proposal; I should have no objection to the term "eccentricities." There are more eccentric people in the world, Mr Mendoza, than you may be aware of; my long experience as a solicitor has taught me that. It would astonish you to hear some of the stories I could tell. Now, against the eccentricities place the advantages—that is all I ask—place the advantages, and see whether they do not weigh the eccentricities down.' He was a lawyer of the old school, and he paused to take a pinch of snuff, and to offer the box to Raphael. 'And do not forget, Mr Mendoza, I beg you not to forget, that it is in the highest degree improbable that such a proposal will ever be made to you again. You are a young man, I am an old one, and I make no excuse for pressing this very strongly upon you.'

He left the room, and Raphael stood for some time in thought. Adopting the lawyer's term 'eccentricities' he reviewed the conditions attached to the proposal, and could see nothing objectionable in them. It was within his

knowledge that Mr Sheldon was a solicitor of the highest respectability ; he stood in the front rank of his profession, and was the adviser of many old and noble families. Therefore every dependence could be placed upon him, and Raphael felt that he would be in safe hands. As Mr Sheldon had advised him to do, he weighed the advantages against the eccentricities, and decided that it would be folly to hesitate any longer. When Mr Sheldon returned his mind was made up, and the shrewd lawyer, before Raphael spoke, saw that the matter was settled.

‘There are two stipulations, Mr Sheldon. Let the name of your client remain for the present unrevealed. But I do not bind myself to work for any definite length of time in the dark. It is quite likely that circumstances, or some kind of impulse, will impel me after the paper is floated to ask that it be revealed.’

‘Say successfully floated, Mr Mendoza.’

‘Well, successfully floated.’

‘That is stipulation number one,’ said Mr Sheldon. ‘My reply is, when you again ask for the name of my client your request will receive the fullest and fairest consideration. I hope that will content you.’

‘I am content.’

‘Now for stipulation number two,’ said the lawyer.

‘It is that you, not I, name the salary.’

‘It was expected that you would object to fix it yourself. Let me see. The lowest salary on this paper is fifteen hundred pounds, the highest, three thousand. We will fix it at three thousand.’

‘It would be idle to deny that I am surprised and gratified,’ said Raphael. ‘I accept, and will devote my best energies towards the success of the paper.’

‘We are satisfied upon that score. Then the affair is settled, and we may commence work at once. Excuse me half a minute.’

At another desk he wrote a cheque, which he placed in an envelope and handed to the new editor. Raphael looked at it, and saw that it was for fifteen hundred pounds, and purported to be six months' salary in advance. He handed it back to Mr Sheldon.

'I cannot accept payment for my services in advance. I may fall ill; I may die; the paper may not live six months. Let the salary be paid monthly, at the end of each month.'

'If my client is eccentric,' observed Mr Sheldon, 'you are not devoid of quixotism.'

'That would be true if it were quixotic to be just,' replied Raphael.

In this way it was that *The Needle* with its motto, 'Sharp at the Point, Clear in the Eye, and of Excellent Temper,' flashed upon the reading public.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AND TIME RUNS ON

FOR the next few weeks there was no busier man in London than Raphael Mendoza, and no man who worked more willingly and zealously. He proved himself quite fitted for the task he had undertaken. No square peg in a round hole; the right man in the right place. The men he gathered round him, reporters, sub-editors, descriptive and statistical writers, adored him, and gave him their best. They had to, for he would not be content with less. He had a great respect for the matured journalist, and a sharp eye for genuine young talent. In after years one of these latter, who had risen to the editorial stool (which, as all people know, is a comfortable padded chair), was proud to say that Raphael Mendoza gave him his first chance, and that he served his apprenticeship on *The Needle*. No newspaper editor could boast of a more loyal staff than that which worked under the rule of the son of Moses Mendoza.

He had his father's spirit in him; work to do, he never tired, never laid down his tools till the joints were firmly riveted. He riveted them hard and fast. No half-measures or half-hearted blows. The War Office groaned as it read his leading articles, and the family of Tite Barnacles drank confusion to him; Patronage held up its hands, and asked High heaven why such a man had been born to vex their souls; the fashionable wives and daughters of Patronage inquired of their husbands and fathers why

they didn't put him down, and the only reply they received was a helpless look; contractors who supply our soldiers with boots, the soles of which are made of brown paper, army clothiers who sweat the poor needlewoman down to the finest starvation point, middlemen who would barter their country's honour for a mess of pottage, trembled when he raised his whip. Not for a single day did he relax his efforts to expose the rotten systems which have cost the nation thousands of valuable lives, and which now threaten to bring still more appalling disasters upon the country. In clear and scathing terms he showed the whole world the writing on the wall. Withering were his denunciations of 'party' in the game of politics, of the frantic struggles for office, of the frantic struggles to keep there, of the peddling, trumpery measures for reform which is never made, of the burking of vital inquiries into inefficiency and corruption. There is a familiar newspaper saying, 'What do they know of England who only England know?' One of his familiar sayings, with respect to politics, was, 'When a nation's honour, a nation's safety, are at stake, there is no party.' It quickly became a proverb, and the little Jacks-in-the-box of public life cursed him in their hearts. They could not have paid him a greater compliment.

Moses Mendoza was not able to assist his son editorially, but he looked on with proud satisfaction, and drew happiness from Raphael's growing reputation. It was the story of his own success repeated in a more noble school than that in which for so many years he had held the foremost place.

But he was of great assistance to *The Needle* in another way. Two or three weeks after the paper was started Raphael was surprised to learn from the business manager that his father was canvassing for advertisements. He did not demur. He knew that the old man was wretched when he was idle, and that the occupation of an advertisement canvasser was a respectable one.

So Moses Mendoza went about, and soon was earning a handsome income. Never was an advertisement canvasser to compare with him. His wheedling ways, his humorous persuasions, his jovial chuckles—there was no resisting them. Auctioneers, land, estate, and shipping agents, managers of entertainments and companies, shopkeepers of every kind—there was not one who did not fall a victim to the wiles of Moses Mendoza. He was a favourite everywhere, and he was continually going to the business manager with new wrinkles, new sensible wrinkles which brought grist to the mill. He could have afforded to buy himself a new gold watch now, but he would not have changed his Waterbury for one set with diamonds.

It was well for Raphael Mendoza that he was kept so busy, for it cannot be said that he was happy. There had been no improvement in the relations between him and Julia. Indeed, she seemed to avoid him, to shrink from him when he addressed her, to stand in his presence as one might have done who had lost her way in life. Grieved to the heart, he ceased to pay her attention. Had she made the slightest advance to him, gladly, joyfully would he have responded to it. But she made no sign.

‘You are happier when we are apart,’ he said to her.

She did not reply, and he construed her silence, and acted upon it. He took a set of rooms in St Martin’s Chambers, and there he wrote many of his most important leading articles, dictating them to Gertrude Carpe, whom he had engaged as his amanuensis. She was a fairly good shorthand writer, and he found in her a willing and capable assistant. He was glad to be able to give her a situation, and she was glad to earn a salary. The work she performed was a healthy medicine to her, for she had suffered deeply. All was over between her and Vivian St Maur, and though the effects of the exposure of her lover’s base character were visible in her

wasted form and plaintive eyes, she was gradually recovering her health and peace of mind.

Once on a November evening she saw him in Regent Street, and she turned so faint that all things swam before her sight.

‘What’s the matter, my girl?’ asked a working man.

‘Nothing, nothing,’ she replied, and the man walked on.

‘Here, come with me, my dear,’ said a woman with painted cheeks.

Gertrude looked and fled, terror and disgust assisting her footsteps.

‘Was it fancy,’ she asked herself, when she paused in Portland Place to get her breath, ‘that he saw me and avoided me?’

It was not fancy; he had seen and avoided her. Why should he speak to her? The meeting would have been awkward; he owed her father money, and he had no desire to renew the intimacy. Had she been rich—well, that was another matter. He could not afford to be intimate with poor girls except for dalliance, and Gertrude was not that sort. So let her go, and be hanged to her! She had done him injury enough.

He sauntered on moodily, his hands in his empty pockets. He had won a couple of sovereigns at one of his clubs last night, but they were soon gone. What was he going to do next year about his clubs? New Year was very near, and his subscriptions would be due. How was he going to pay them? If he could get to Monte Carlo—a plunge at the tables—the maximum on a number— But how was he to get there, and where was the money for the stake? He ground his teeth. Nemesis was overtaking him.

He had appealed to Julia to assist him—not in person, for she would not receive him—but by letter. She sent him a five-pound note, with the words, ‘Never write to me again.’ The cat! After all he had done for her!

He did write again, saying he thought of marrying, and needed funds badly. He signed himself, 'Your loving and unhappy cousin.' He was eager to learn how much she knew, and also whether, hearing that he was about to marry, she would be induced by jealousy to call him back again.

She replied to the letter, and said that when he was married to Miss Mayfield, who was then in Holt, she would see what she could do for his wife. 'I informed Miss Carpe,' said Julia, 'that you had written to me and that I was replying. She requested me to return the engagement ring you gave her.' He turned the ring round and round and laughed. Carpe's money had paid for it. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, 'Curse her!' he muttered, as he went to the pawnbroker's with the ring. 'She knows everything. Who told her? Marry Jenny Mayfield and hire myself out as a farm labourer! I think I see myself!' He might have done worse.

Mr Carpe also obtained an engagement on the business staff of *The Needle*, and his earnings and those of his daughter were sufficient to lift them from the poverty into which his Stock Exchange speculations had plunged them. The world was growing bright again. At breakfast Gertrude laughed at something he told her. Yes, actually laughed. He thought of that laugh all that day, and was quite merry. Now, for Mr Carpe to be merry was very unusual. Ah, well! Let us be thankful, we middle-aged men and women, for the children. Stop here by the wayside, as white-faced Mr Carpe stopped before a milliner's window looking at a hat that would be very becoming to his child, and, gazing at a little wild flower, let us be merry too.

Will you not join us, Raphael? He cannot. He has a spare hour, and a brooding melancholy has settled upon his spirits. It is often so now in his spare hours, and he is grateful that has so few of them. In the ardour and enthusiasm of work he does not allow this melancholy to

creep upon him. Oh, for a draught of Oblivion from the African river !

'Lord, keep my memory green,' is for the happy.

It is three days before Christmas, and he is walking to Julia's house, carrying a Christmas present for her. He has not seen her for a fortnight. In the course of those two weeks he has written her four letters, bidding her call to him if she needs him. She has not called to him, and now he walks along with a sad wonder at his heart whether she will ever soften towards him. Work is sweet, the sweetest thing in life—except love ; and love is denied to him. What mockery to live as he is living, married yet estranged, united to a woman who is only happy when he is not by her side ! What mockery—what bitter, bitter mockery !

He arrives at Julia's house. There is something strange in its appearance. The blinds are down. With a cold fear at his heart he knocks at the door. He has a latchkey, but it is Julia's house.

A female servant answers the summons.

'Your mistress ! Lady Julia ! She is not ill ?'

'No, sir.'

He breathes a prayer of thankfulness.

'She is at home ?'

'No, sir. Don't you know ?'

'Know ! What ?'

'She went away a fortnight ago, sir.'

'A fortnight ago ! Where has she gone ?'

For the second time the woman is about to say, 'Don't you know ?' But she restrains herself, and says instead, 'I don't know, sir. She left no word.'

He leaves her standing at the door looking after him. Back to his chambers—to work, to work !

CHAPTER XXXIX

RAPHAEL DECIDES UPON HIS COURSE OF ACTION

LATER in the day Mr Sheldon, the solicitor, called upon Raphael in response to an urgent request for an immediate interview. The conversation commenced with Mr Sheldon's references to the success of *The Needle*.

'It is most gratifying,' he said, 'and in newspaper history I should say unprecedented. I agree with my client that it is due entirely to you. Our sanguine expectations have been more than realised.'

'We will not discuss that,' said Raphael. 'I am pleased he is satisfied. The object of this interview has no concern with the business affairs of the paper. It is purely a private matter between him and myself.'

'Yes?' said the lawyer, and now there was a thoughtful expression on his countenance.

'Read this, Mr Sheldon.'

The lawyer took the paper which Raphael handed to him. It was a paper the circulation of which had been somewhat affected by the success of *The Needle*, and the leading article to which Raphael directed Mr Sheldon's attention was a malevolent attack upon its flourishing rival. The writer not only attacked the editorial policy of *The Needle*, and hinted at corrupt motives, but he went into matters touching the proprietorship.

'There is a mystery,' he said, 'where the funds came from to launch the paper; no one knows, no one can say,

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and all inquiries on the subject are met by misrepresentations or direct evasions. One thing, however, seems to be established, and that is that it is not the property of a company, but of a private individual.

‘It may be asked, “Of what interest is it to the public that the name of this individual should be disclosed?” We reply, “Of the greatest interest, when the disclosure of the name will confirm or dispel an ugly suspicion respecting a certain colossal Stock Exchange speculator and company promoter, who failed a short time ago for millions, and whose creditors have, it is said, received very nearly twenty shillings in the pound.”

‘Now, under what circumstances was this satisfactory dividend paid? The creditors were first asked to accept sixteen shillings in the pound, but they had the strongest reasons for the belief that the estate could pay their claims in full, and they did not see why the debtor should be allowed to slip through, chuckling, with several hundreds of thousands of pounds of their money in his rapacious pockets. They exercised pressure, and boldly threatened to throw the estate into the Bankruptcy Court. It may be assumed that this threat, involving as it did the public examination of well-known persons, some of them of the highest rank, caused the debtor to disgorge, and the result was that the creditors obtained very nearly the full twenty shillings to which they were justly entitled. Is it unreasonable to deduce from this that there was some concealment of property on the part of the debtor—an offence indictable in a criminal court? And, if, in addition to the enforced disgorgement of concealed property, the debtor was afterwards able to furnish the funds for the launching of a daily newspaper, it will prove that the offer of sixteen shillings in the pound was a deliberate attempt at fraud. What confidence can be placed in a journal started under such auspices? Therefore it is that we call for the

announcement of the name of the proprietor of the daily paper to which our remarks refer.'

'This is a clear libel,' said Mr Sheldon, 'for which damages can be obtained.'

'Libel upon whom?' asked Raphael.

'Upon your father.'

'Few persons who read it can doubt whose character is attacked?'

'Few, if any.'

'That is the point which touches me. My duty is to vindicate my father's honour, and this must be done without delay. When I undertook the editorship of *The Needle* I agreed that the name of the person who furnished the funds should for the present remain undisclosed. I stated at the same time that I did not bind myself to work for any definite period in the dark, and that circumstances might occur, after the paper was successfully floated, which would render it necessary that the name of the proprietor should be revealed. The paper has been successfully floated, the circumstances have occurred, and I now demand to know for whom I am working.'

'And in the event of my client refusing?' said Mr Sheldon.

'This is the 22nd of December,' replied Raphael. 'If before the end of the year the name is not made known to me—nay, I go a step farther—if before the end of the year I am not favoured with a personal introduction to him, my connection with *The Needle* ceases.'

'This is a sudden and serious resolution, Mr Mendoza.'

'It is a resolution demanded by the circumstances, Mr Sheldon, and I am not to be shaken from it.'

'Your resignation would bring ruin upon the paper.'

'Better that than bring ruin upon an honest man's reputation.'

Mr Sheldon considered a moment before he spoke again.

Raphael decides upon His Course of Action 315

Then he said, 'In the event of your demand being acceded to, may I regard it as understood that you will remain at your post?'

'Before I answer that question I must ask you one. You are acquainted with the proprietor, and are a man of honour. In the withholding of the name from my knowledge is there any improper motive?'

'I can honestly answer—none. The motive is an honourable one.'

'In that case, if I obtain a personal introduction before the end of the year, I will remain at my post.'

'Then there is nothing more to be said. I will inform my client of your determination, and you shall receive a reply very soon.'

With this understanding they shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XL

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW *

Ring out, ye bells, in the cold,
Steadfast and solemn and true ;
Ring out the death of the Old—
Ring in the birth of the New.

Ring out the Old !
For which we conceived ambitions now past.
Have they all been attained ?
Has their summit been gained ?
Have we faltered and failed ? Or clung to them fast ?
Can we think with content
On the work we have done ?
The hours are now run—
Were they worthily spent ?
Have they borne us good fruit ? Think ! this is the last !
Are there moments we fain
Would live over again ?
Too late to recall—they are past, they are past !

Ring in the New !
Fresh hopes are conceived, ambition looks high,
And eager desire
Through our veins runs like fire—
Strong heart and bold step, and bright, steadfast eye.
With resolute stride
We will toil night and day
Through the thorn-begirt way.
Will we ne'er turn aside
Down blossoming bye-ways in comfort to lie ?
Our course is marked clear
Through the forthcoming year—
Will our purpose abide when the months are flown by ?

Ring out the Old !
With its rich load of joy and its burden of pain,

* The poem is by the author's daughter, Eleanor Farjeon.

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With its flow'r and its thorn,
And the griefs we have borne,
And the love we have known, and the loss and the gain ;
With its moments of care
And its moments of light,
With its vapours of night
And its morning-blush rare,
And its bright star of hope when all striving seemed vain ;
With its shadow of death,
And its life-giving breath,
And its bitter-sweet memories of sunshine and rain.

Ring in the New !
With its unexplored wealth of hope and of fear
For Youth and Old Age.
When we turn back the page
Will the future look bright or the prospect be drear ?
What more shall we learn ?
Will the hand of our friend
Be in ours at the end ?
Or shall our souls yearn,
And our chaplets of grief be enriched by a tear ?
God keep our hearts pure
To enjoy or endure
The sweets and the sorrows of this His New Year.

Ring out, ye bells, in the cold,
Steadfast and solemn and true ;
Ring out the death of the Old—
Ring in the birth of the New.

It was within two hours of midnight of the 31st of December, and Raphael was in his chambers, dictating the concluding sentences of an article on the New Year which was to appear in *The Needle*. Within hearing, but screened from view, his amanuensis, Gertrude Carpe, was taking shorthand notes of the article, of which only a few sentences remained to be dictated. The spirit of the article had been derived from a poem on the Old Year and the New which had been sent to him by a young girl, and the thoughts therein expressed had appeared to him so appropriate to the time, and were so manifestly the outpourings of an earnest mind, that he had placed the verses at the head of the column, and had borrowed a few phrases from them to

strike home the lesson to his readers. Moses Mendoza was sitting in a part of the room where his presence would not interrupt the current of his son's thoughts. He had entered while Raphael was dictating, and had crept softly to the back. At a short distance from him sat a boy who was waiting to take the copy to the printing-office. The lad was thirteen or fourteen years of age, and the quietude of the apartment—for there was an element of repose in Raphael's voice, which was low and sad—and a long day's work had made him drowsy. He had dozed off, and was several times in danger of tumbling off his chair, but on every occasion he recovered himself quickly, opened his sleepy eyes, closed them again, and the next moment was wandering again in the Land of Nod. Deep-hearted love and admiration were in Moses Mendoza's countenance as he listened to his son, but now and again he would cast a kindly glance at the tired boy, and more than once he saved him from sprawling on the floor.

'Ring out the Old Year, ring in the New,' said Raphael. 'The memories of the past remain with us—its flower and its thorn, its load of joy and its burden of sorrow, the love we have known, and the loss and the gain.' His voice faltered here, and his lips moved silently. Presently he resumed: 'Let us learn the lessons they teach, and profit by them. With stout heart, bold step, and steadfast eye, we will tread the new paths opening out to us; and with a sigh of regret for hopes that have proved to be dreams, we will buckle our armour close for the faithful performance of life's work, for the earnest endeavour to make the world better than it is. To one and all our readers we send the greeting of a Happy New Year.'

He paused to allow his amanuensis time for transcription.

'Have you got that, Miss Carpe?'

'Yes, sir,' said Gertrude Carpe, from behind the screen.

'That is the end of the article. Copy it out as quickly as you can. The boy is waiting for the copy.'

'I shall not be very long, sir.'

Raphael turned to his father, who rose from his seat, and came forward, rubbing his hands.

'Do you know, Raphe,' he said, 'when I'm a-listening to you I keep on wondering and wondering where it all comes from. There ain't another man in England could talk like that.'

'There are thousands who can talk better. Come to the fire; the night is cold. You think too well of me, father.'

'Not possible, Raphe, not possible. Don't tell me about your thousands of men; there ain't one to come up to you.' If ever man spoke with conviction, Moses Mendoza did. 'I don't disturb you, do I, when I'm in the room, and you're pouring of them articles out?'

'No, you help me, rather. Patience never sat on a monument more quietly than you do.'

'Didn't it, Raphe?' said Moses Mendoza, rather mystified at this figure of speech. 'I don't know as I should like to set on a monyment myself; it'd be a bit spikey.' He laughed, but the next moment looked wistfully at his son. 'Do all editors mean what they write, Raphe?'

'Those who write with sincerity do.'

'That's 'ow you write.'

'I hope so. My heart is in my work.'

'Yes, Raphe, yes. Your 'eart was in them words Miss Carpe is writing out now.'

'You know, father, of whom I was thinking.'

'Of Julia?' Raphe nodded assent. 'You ain't 'eard nothink of 'er, Raphe?'

'Nothing—nor do I know where she is. She seems to have taken pains to break the last tie that bound us together.'

The Pride of Race

'Aven't you no idea where she's gone to?'

'No.'

'No, of course not. 'Ow could you 'ave? And you don't know what she's doing?'

'No.'

'No. 'Ow could you know? 'Aven't you arsked at the 'ouse?'

'Only once, and then the woman who answered me seemed to think it so strange that a man should be seeking to know where his wife was that I did not inquire again. It would be placing not only myself but Julia in a false light.'

'So you don't go there at all, Raphe?'

'Yes, I do. There is not a night that I have not lingered outside, looking for some sign of her return. I was there to-night. There was no light in the windows; the house is like a grave.' He sighed deeply. 'I must bear it, and wait until I hear from her—if I ever hear! That I have lost sight of her, that I do not employ agents to discover her, may, in the judgment of some persons, lay me open to reproach; but I feel that to set a watch upon her movements would be unworthy of her and of me. Father, our marriage was a mistake from the first.'

'Nearly everybody makes mistakes, Raphe, some time or other.'

'Few who do not.'

'Going through life,' said Moses Mendoza, in one of those reflective moods which came upon him when he was most deeply stirred, 'is like going through a strange country. You're always coming across somethink you don't expect—a river that you don't know the depth of, a road that leads into the thick of a dark forest, a lot of rocky mountains; but, love your 'eart! a man who knows 'is way about, as you do, and who never does nothink that ain't right, as you do, soon gets out of these difficulties. He swims across the river, he

gets safe over the rocky mountains, and finds 'isself the other side of the forest, not much the worse for the troubles he's gone through.'

'Sometimes he loses his way, and is lost,' said Raphael.

'That won't 'appen to you, Raphe, take my word for it; you ain't the sort. It's like an olive, that's salt and bitter to the taste at first, but you keep on chewing it, and then you find out 'ow sweet it is.'

'Not a day passes,' said Raphael, with an affectionate look, 'that the loving burden of gratitude I owe you does not sink deeper into my heart. You have taught me, you are teaching me, how to suffer and be strong.'

'You don't owe me nothink, Raphe,' said Moses Mendoza, his voice charged with emotion. 'It's me as owes everythink to you, all the 'appiness of my life from the day you was born. *Do* you think your marriage was a mistake?'

'How can I think otherwise? Not hers the fault; I should have seen the barrier that stretched between us. She spoke truly when she said we had no sympathies in common. The schools in which we were reared were so wide apart! The pride of race is part of her life, and in that pride the belief that the mere accident of birth places her and those of her rank above their human brothers and sisters.'

'It doesn't, Raphe.'

'It does not; and I am happy to say that many who sit in high places recognise it, and that there is growing a more general recognition of the truer belief that it is the record of a man's own life that gives him his place among men, and that he is no longer to be honoured before the book is written. Not by the past, but by the present and the future shall he be judged. Let that be my comfort—but it is hard to forget!'

'You're fond of Julia still, Raphe?' asked Moses Mendoza, tenderly.

'I love her as dearly as ever I did. It is my bitterest pang that she is lost to me.'

'It was all my fault. I stood betwixt you. I ain't blamin' 'er, mind, I ain't blamin' 'er. It was so 'ard, you see, for 'er to get used to me; and when I think 'ow young she was, and 'ow little she knew of the world, I ain't got a word to say agin 'er.'

'It is like you,' said Raphael, and turned to Gertrude Carpe, who came from behind the screen with some sheets of manuscript in her hand.

'Here is the copy, sir.'

There was still in her face some traces of the grief which had fallen upon her young life, but an inward strength was supporting her, and helping her to battle through it. Her love for Vivian was dead, but it had left no feeling of bitterness behind; she thought of him only with pity. These gentler sentiments of pity and forgiveness are drawn from the sweetest attributes of a woman's nature.

CHAPTER XLI

THE PRINTER'S DEVIL

'THANK you,' said Raphael, looking over the copy and speaking at the same time. 'It is late. You must be tired.'

'Oh, no, sir,' said Gertrude, and her voice was quite bright, 'I am not at all tired.'

'It was arranged that your father should call for you.'

'Yes, sir.'

'You can wait for him in that room. You will find a little package on the table with your name on it, two volumes of Tennyson's poems. With my kindest wishes for the New Year, Miss Carpe.'

'You are very good to me, sir. May I take my copying in with me? There is still half an hour's work to do.'

'Unless you would prefer to rest. The copy is not required till to-morrow.'

'I would prefer to finish it now, sir.'

'Do so, then,' said Raphael; and, to his father, 'Miss Carpe is an admirable amanuensis; she saves me a world of trouble.'

'Good girl—good girl! Happy New Year to you, my dear!'

'Thank you, sir. And to you, too—and to you, sir,' to Raphael.

'Thank you, Miss Carpe.'

'I think it will be, I think it will be,' said Moses Mendoza,

briskly. 'I should like to make it a Happy New Year to everybody.'

The bright look on his face found a reflection in Gertrude's as she went into the adjoining room.

'Boy!' called Raphael, putting the sheets of his leading article together. Receiving no answer he called again, but the boy still slumbered. 'The lad's asleep. Behold, here, father, the nineteenth-century Mercury, the messenger of a power far more potent than the gods of Olympus ever exercised over the minds of men.'

'What! This little chap!' exclaimed Moses Mendoza.

'Respect him. The fate of empires passes through his hands. He is the printer's devil.'

He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and shook him gently; the boy started to his feet and cried,—

'Yes, sir!'

'Sleepy?' asked Raphael, smiling.

'Oh, no, sir,' replied the lad, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes with his knuckles.

'Wide awake, eh?'

'Yes, sir.'

'That's right. Take this copy to the office, and say I must have the proof within the hour.'

'Yes, sir,' said the lad, and was making his way to the door when Raphael's voice stopped him.

'Stay. I haven't seen you before. How long have you been at the office?'

'Two months, sir.'

'What wages do you get?'

'Four shillings a week, sir.'

'Expect a rise?'

'Another, shilling, sir, at the end of four months, if I give satisfaction.'

'You mean to?'

'Oh, yes, sir.'

'At what time did you commence work this morning?'

'Eight o'clock, sir.'

'Overtime, eh?'

The boy's eyes gleamed. 'Twopence an hour, sir.'

'Had your breakfast before you left home?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Brought your dinner with you?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What did you 'ave for dinner?' asked Moses Mendoza, who had been listening with lively satisfaction.

'Mother made me a meat pudding in a basin, sir.'

'Good mother! Good mother!'

'Yes, sir.'

'And you have been at the office all day?' said Raphael.

'An hour for dinner, sir, half an hour for tea.'

'The hours are too long.'

'Oh, no, sir; I'm all right.'

Raphael looked at the boy attentively, and thought of the time when he was a poor boy in Spitalfields. The lad's clothes were not untidy, but there were many patches on them, all neatly done; for broken boots, however, the mother's needle was unavailing.

'Do you live far from the office?' he asked.

'Three miles, sir.'

'Walk there and back?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Boots in rather bad condition.'

The boy looked down dejectedly, looked up brightly, proving himself to be a boy who was not to be daunted by broken boots; mother's spirit in him, brave, patient, hopeful, looking on the bright side of things. Beautiful inheritance!

'How much will a new pair cost?' asked Raphael.

'I can get a stunning pair for four and six, sir,' replied the boy, eagerly. 'I've got one and tenpence saved up.'

'What do you do with your wages?'

'Give 'em to mother, sir.'

'Good boy! Good boy!' said Moses Mendoza.

'She gives me sixpence for myself, sir.'

'Out of which you saved your one and tenpence,' said Raphael.

'And with what the printers give me for fetching their beer and tea.'

'What do you want to be when you're a man?' asked Moses Mendoza.

The boy glanced at Raphael, awe and worship in his eyes.

'I know what I'd like to be, sir.'

'What?'

'Editor of a daily paper, sir, like that gentleman.'

'Bravo!' said Raphael.

Moses Mendoza rubbed his hands gleefully and chuckled. 'Ha! ha! ha! Ha! ha! ha!'

Raphael took five shillings from his purse. 'Buy a stout pair of boots for the New Year.'

'Oh, thank you sir!'

'And 'ere's sixpence for a cup of corfey and a cake,' said Moses Mendoza.

'Thank you, sir. Happy New Year to you, sir.' To Moses. 'Happy New Year, sir.' To Raphael.

'The same to you,' said Raphael.

'And to your mother,' added Moses Mendoza.

'I'll tell her, sir. Thank you.'

A boy with a light heart went whistling down the stairs, and into the open, where the snow was beginning to fall. It was not a heavy fall, nor did it promise to be, but if it had been a hurricane it would have mattered little to a poor printer's devil with five shillings in his pocket for a new pair of boots. That was not all. There was the one and tenpence he had saved up towards them, and when he paid for

the boots there would be sixpence left out of the five shillings. Still something more. He had sixpence in his pocket for 'a cup of corfey and a cake' that would not cost more than threepence. Wealth illimitable! Let the snow fall, let the cold wind nip his nose and the tips of his ears, nothing can dash his spirits as he trudges along blithely, whistling his loudest. What shall he do with his unmortgaged wealth? It does not take him long to make up his mind. His eyes brighten, he wishes all the shops were open. He is going to buy something for mother.

'There goes a happy boy,' thinks the Earl of Lynwood as he passes the lad.

Is there magnetism in the air? Involuntarily his lips play echo to the air the printer's devil is whistling. He breaks off in the middle of a bar, and laughs softly to himself.

'I don't think I've whistled since I was a boy,' he murmurs.

CHAPTER XLII

TWENTY SHILLINGS IN THE POUND

RAPHAEL, who had thrown himself into an armchair, heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and half rose when the door opened and the earl entered. With a sigh of disappointment he resumed his seat.

'You look tired,' said the earl, after greetings had been exchanged.

'I have had a long day. Are you alone?'

'Yes, I am alone. I have some pleasant news for you, Raphael, which I could have communicated earlier in the day—'

'Concerning *The Needle*? ' interrupted Raphael, eagerly.

'No. Before I proceed, may I ask if you adhere to the resolution you formed of severing your connection with the paper unless the proprietor is introduced to you before the end of the year?'

'I am quite resolved. Shortly after I explained my reason to Mr Sheldon I explained them also to you and to my father. The attacks upon him are continued, and it is the only course open to me to prove how false they are. You surely must approve of my resolution to vindicate his honour and good name.'

'I think you are right, Raphael. In my association with you there is no act of yours of which I have disapproved.'

'The time is short. It wants but little more than an hour to the close of the year, and I am not quite satisfied with Mr Sheldon's conduct. He said that he would communicate

with the proprietor, and he subsequently promised that a personal introduction would take place before the New Year. I have reminded him of this promise twice since our interview, and he has repeated it, with the result that I am still in the dark, and still unable to give the lie to my father's traducers. To-morrow I shall make public my severance and my father's severance with *The Needle*, and shall consider what further steps I shall take.'

'Let us hope it will not be needed,' said the earl. 'Meanwhile, hear my pleasant news. As I said, I could have communicated it to you earlier in the day, but I had reasons for holding it over until now. It refers to the thirty thousand pounds which at the settlement of our affairs was still required to make up the full payment of twenty shillings in the pound to our creditors. I am informed by Mr Sheldon that this sum has been paid.'

In great excitement Raphael cried, 'By whom?'

'A seal has been placed upon my lips,' replied the earl. 'I cannot tell you, but you will not be allowed to remain long in ignorance. Mr Sheldon further informs me that he has written to all the daily papers with the exception of *The Needle*, requesting them to give publicity to this—ha, hum!—gratifying piece of news. He thought it likely that you would wish to make the announcement yourself in the columns of the paper you edit; it will go far to silence the slanderers.' He turned to Moses Mendoza. 'Mr Mendoza, we are comrades in good as in evil fortune. So great is my relief that I cannot find words to adequately express my feelings. While a single shilling was owing to our creditors it seemed as if I could not—ha, hum!—breathe quite freely. You have a gifted defender in your son, but let me tell you that any person—be it man or woman—who dares to cast aspersions upon your honour will have to answer for it to me, for in attacking Mr Moses Mendoza they attack the Earl of Lynwood. We

stand before the world without—ha, hum!—a stain upon our shields.'

'Glad to 'ear it, earl, glad to 'ear it,' said Moses Mendoza. 'I don't know where my shield could 'ave got to, and to tell you the truth, I ain't sure whether I ever 'ad one. As to stains, earl, there never was a smudge on the noble name of Lynwood. It speaks for itself. I 'ope you won't mind my saying that Mendoza ain't a bad name, either.'

'It is recorded, sir, in the most glorious chapters of Spanish history. A great, a noble name; and you have worthily upheld it.'

'It's more than kind of you to say so, earl. I never thought much of it myself till my boy Raphe stepped into the front rank, and showed the stuff that was in 'im. Then I did feel as it was a name to be proud of, but it was 'im as made it so. A brother earl of yourn—Beaconsfield, you know; the Queen was very fond of 'im; sends a bookey to put on 'is grave every year, I'm told—when he was plain Ben Disraeli 'ad a father to 'elp 'im on, a gentleman so chock-full of learning that he 'ad to pour it out in books. You've 'eard about 'em, I daresay, earl.'

'Isaac Disraeli is a famous name in literature,' said the earl, smiling. 'His *Curiosities of Literature* is a classic.'

'One of 'is books, ain't it, earl?'

'Yes.'

'That's where 'is son Ben 'ad the advantage of Raphe, a father he could be proud of. I ain't much of a classic myself. I couldn't write a book to save my life. All I could do was to try and go straight.'

'The man who succeeds in that endeavour, Mr Mendoza, as you have done, establishes his claim to stand side by side with the highest in the land.'

During the utterance of these appreciative sentiments Raphael had remained plunged in thought. Gratifying as was the news which the earl had imparted, the mystery

surrounding it, as well as the mystery respecting the proprietor of *The Needle*, perplexed and troubled him. After the earl's announcement that his lips were sealed Raphael felt that he could not question him farther; his only course was to await the fulfilment of the promise that the mystery would soon be cleared up. His patience could scarcely be more severely taxed in the future than it had been in the past.

'I will go to the office,' he said to the earl, 'and write a short leading article there, announcing the payment of this thirty thousand pounds to the creditors of the estate. Something more than a mere formal letter from a lawyer is necessary.'

'We will accompany you,' said the earl; and the three men went out together.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE WOMAN AND THE MAN

‘MAY I speak to you?’

The woman pressed her hand to her heart, paused a moment, then, without answering, went on her way.

‘I beg you to listen to me.’

But still the woman went on her way, trembling with indignation and remorse.

‘In memory of old times,’ the man continued to plead, ‘let me have a word with you.’

The tearful voice, the uncertain motion of the hand as he kept pace with her, the expression on the face he raised for her to see, were mere tricks to work upon her feelings. With covert, sullen glance he watched their effect upon her.

The woman stopped, and he shifted his position so that her eyes must rest upon him. The snow was still falling, and there was a light in the sky which made all things visible to them, but he was more observant of her gestures and expressions than she of his.

‘In memory of old times,’ the woman said, ‘I should avoid you as I would a man who has brought ruin and despair to more than one helpless creature. Not to the strong; to the weak. What is it you wish to say?’

‘I would ask you first to do me justice.’

‘I would not ask that,’ she said. ‘It is for you too dangerous a test.’

He suppressed the retort that rose to his lips. 'See what my love for you has brought me to,' he said. 'I have dared everything for you, risked everything for you, laid myself open to every form of misconception; and now that I am stripped of friends and fortune, you throw me off. You made me believe that you returned my love.'

'It is false. What you believed sprang from your wish to ensnare me. You did not know what love was—nor, alas! did I. The affection I had for you was the affection of a cousin to whom, when she was a child, you were kind.'

'Ah, you remember that,' he said with a soft bitterness in his voice.

'Yes, I remember that. In those days I used to look up to you as to one who could do no wrong, who could think no wrong, and in that trustfulness lay the hold you had upon me. You could not at that time have harboured evil thoughts towards me—it would be monstrous to believe that such a thing were possible; but that, for purposes of your own, you traded upon it when poverty was banished from our door by my marriage—of that I have no doubt.'

'You are under a delusion. I did not trade upon it. If sincerity is a crime, I am punished for it; and if my motives have been misrepresented it is my misfortune that you should place faith in my enemies rather than in me.'

'There has been no misrepresentation. In my presence, since the day we met in Mr Carpe's house, your name has not been mentioned by my husband or my father. It is by your actions to one poor girl whom you betrayed, and to another whose heart you nearly broke, that I judge you. Had you been what I believed you to be, you would have been to me a counsellor for good instead of evil. But you stood like a bad angel at my side. Looking back as I have done during the last few months I shudder at the pit you dug for me, in which every feeling of self-respect, every

principle of honour, would have been engulfed, to my life-long shame and misery. It was you who, after I was married, poisoned my mind, and first instilled into me the seed of doubt and discontent, who told me that I had been trafficked and bargained for, bought and sold like a slave—you twisted to his disparagement and disadvantage every word and act of the man who stands as far above you, and as far above me, as the stars—you fostered the false pride which I truly believe would have died out of my heart as I grew to know him for what he is, and fed it with specious tales of his cunning and duplicity—you placed an injurious construction upon every tender word and look he gave me—until from your showing it seemed as if I had been the mock of a man as base as I now know you to be. I do not seek to excuse myself. Deeply, deeply was I to blame for the faith I had in you, for the course I took, for the misery I brought to one who loved and trusted me, and whose dearest wish was to make me happy. I thank God—with all my heart and soul I thank God that I escaped the snare you laid for me! And if it be a satisfaction to you, learn from my lips that I shall never know peace until he has forgiven me.'

'Ah, you have gone back to him!'

'No; but I am going, if he will receive me.'

'It is what I might have expected. The man is a fool who puts his trust in a woman.'

'What would you call a woman who puts her trust in a man of your stamp, who gives her happiness, her honour, the best hopes of her life, into his keeping? All honest men and women cry shame upon you! Let there be an end to this. Farewell.'

He plucked at her cloak. 'Julia!'

'Mr St Maur,' she said, drawing back.

'Well, then, Lady Julia,' he whined, recognising that all ties between them were irrevocably destroyed, 'you said that

I was kind to you when you were a child. Because of that, I beg you to help me.'

'With money?'

'I am penniless,' he said, and now his trembling voice rang true. Terror was stealing upon him. That night, in the only club open to him, men had refused to sit down with him at one card-table, and at another he had lost his last shilling, and had risen in debt. He knew he dared not show his face there again. He was indeed penniless, and in the woman he was now addressing lay his only hope. A coward at heart, he had not the courage to do a desperate deed; he belonged to the class of men who play the insolent bully in prosperity and the whining craven in adversity. 'Give me a chance to do better in the future.'

He stammered over the words, and stood humbly before her. His appeal to the days of her childhood and for the chance of amendment was successful.

'I will consult those who are wiser than I,' she said, 'and will see what can be done. Give me your address. To-morrow you will receive a letter.'

He gave her a card.

'But what shall I do to-night?' he cried.

She took a sovereign from her purse; he seized it eagerly.

'You will be sure to write,' he said.

'I shall not write,' she replied, 'but you will hear. From this night you and I are strangers.'

CHAPTER XLIV

THE KISS

PURSUING her way, she thought no more of the man she had left. The errand upon which she was engaged so entirely absorbed her faculties that in her mind no place could be found for other considerations. A vital issue was at stake, and would be decided before the bells of the New Year rang out.

How would he receive her? After his bitter experiences during the few months of his married life, could she expect him to open his arms to her? Would he not rather listen incredulously to her tardy acknowledgment of his honesty and good faith, and in the end refuse to believe that she was sincere? Her contemptuous disregard of the position he had won, of the honours he had gained; her lack of sympathy with his aspirations; the cruel coldness with which she had met his ardent advances; the false accusations of baseness and duplicity she had brought against him; the constant slights she had passed upon him—how could she hope that in an instant all this would be forgotten and forgiven, and that he would accept the professions of the woman who had so misjudged him?

But even in the midst of this torturing doubt her heart whispered, 'Be of good cheer. His love for you is in its nature so noble and unselfish that it will leap forward joyfully when you plead to him. All will be well.' But the next moment she was filled with despair. What virtues,

what ennobling characteristics, what excelling qualities, were there in her that a simple word from her lips should be sufficient to heal the wounds she had inflicted upon him? What if they were mortal wounds, the death-blow to a love which she had spurned, but now regarded as the sweetest gift which earth and heaven could have in store for her.

An incident, trivial perhaps in itself, but significant in its indication of the change that had taken place in her, diverted for a brief space the current of her thoughts. She crossed a woman who was trudging along in the snow holding a little boy by the hand.

'Step out, Johnnie, old man,' said the woman. 'Father 'll be wondering where we've got to.'

The hearty cheerfulness in the woman's voice struck her like a blow. She could not see the face, but it was evident that the speaker was poor by the thin scarf on her shoulders, and she noticed that it was as much as Johnnie, old man, could do to keep pace with his mother, bravely as he stepped out. But no murmur issued from his lips, and there was in his heart no protest against the nipping wind which caused his frail body to shiver. Julia hurried after them.

'I beg your pardon.'

The woman stopped, and then Julia noticed that Johnnie's nose was blue, and that he was insufficiently clad for wintry weather. The woman had no gloves, nor had Johnnie; bare of overcoat also was he, and when he stopped at Julia's summons he blew upon his fingers and stamped on the snowy pavement for warmth.

'Have you lost your way, lady?' asked the woman. 'Where do you want to go?'

'I have not lost my way,' said Julia, and for a moment or two could say nothing more. She was not versed in the ways of the poor, and could not speak their language. 'Your little boy looks cold. May I give him something?'

The woman's face flushed. 'We're not beggars, lady. Come along, Johnnie.'

'Please let me,' said Julia. 'I don't want to offend you, but I'll take it as a great kindness. It may bring me good fortune. To-morrow is New Year's Day.'

She slipped two sovereigns into the boy's hand, and walked quickly away.

'What has she given you, Johnnie?' asked the woman, staring after the strange lady.

'Two new farthings, mummy,' said Johnnie, holding out the coins.

'Well!' exclaimed the woman. 'And spoke as if we was doing her a favour! Father 'll hardly believe it. Did you see that sealskin coat she had on, Johnnie?'

'I touched it, mummy. Wasn't it warm?'

'I shouldn't wonder if it cost more than twenty pounds. Good luck to her! She deserves it. You shall have a new suit to-morrow, old man.'

Julia hurried on. She had given money in charity before, but never in such a spirit and with such a glow at her heart as now. When she put her name on a subscription list she had thought no more of it, but the figure of 'Johnnie, old man,' looking up into her face, blowing on his fingers and stamping his toes, was to remain long in her mind. Sweet as gentle rain from heaven on a summer day are such ministrations of kindness, and sweet the reward they bring to the giver.

Yes, Julia was changed. Through her husband and her husband's father she had learned that the world was not made solely for her class, for her race, and that, lacking sympathy with the lowly and the poor, she was less to be considered than the humblest born woman in the land. The scales had fallen from her eyes, and she saw all things in a purer light.

In this mood she reached her husband's chambers, and was informed by the hall porter that he had gone to the

newspaper office, and had left word that he would soon return.

‘His rooms are on the first floor?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ the man replied. ‘You will see his name on the door.’

‘Is no one there?’

‘His secretary, Miss Carpe, is there. When her father comes to fetch her home, I am to go up and tell her.’

As the man imparted the information Mr Carpe made his appearance. He gave no expression to his surprise at seeing Lady Julia, but bowing respectfully said that he had just come from the office of *The Needle*, and that her husband had requested him to say to anyone who might be waiting to see him that he would be back in a few minutes.

‘Are you going to his rooms, my lady?’ asked Mr Carpe.

‘Yes,’ she replied.

‘Will you have the kindness to tell my daughter that I have called for her?’

‘I will send her down to you.’

‘May I take the liberty of wishing your ladyship a happy New Year?’

‘Thank you, Mr Carpe. I wish you the same.’

It was her first visit to her husband’s chambers, and she hesitated on the landing. Gertrude Carpe, who had finished her copying, and was waiting for her father, heard a sound in the passage, and opened the door. Her face lit up with joy when she saw Julia.

‘Oh, my lady,’ she said, ‘I am glad you have come!’

Julia looked around with a fast-beating heart.

‘Where do you work, Gertrude?’

‘When Mr Mendoza is dictating, behind the screen. Then I don’t disturb him by looking up, as if I were waiting for the next sentence. Most of my copying is done in there.’ She pointed to the door of the inner room.

‘Is he happy?’

'Only when he is working, my lady; then I think he tries to forget.'

'And you?' said Julia, tears in her eyes.

'I am happier than I was.' Their voices were trembling.

'There are lessons in life we all have to learn.'

'Yes, my lady. Perhaps it was for the best.'

'I am sure it was. Here is a New Year's gift for you. With my loving wishes, Gertrude.'

'Oh, thank you, my lady. Mr Mendoza has given me Tennyson's poems. Oh, my lady, you know what I wish you!'

'I know, dear. Your father is downstairs. Good-night. God bless you!'

'And grant all your hopes, my lady!'

They kissed, and Julia was alone.

She stood almost motionless awhile, then softly stepped about the room, touching objects tenderly, as though there were a living spirit in them. Her hand rested wistfully upon the chair he sat in, upon the table at which he wrote. It was there he worked, it was there he strove to forget.

In the centre of the mantelpiece was her photograph in a silver frame, the portrait of her which he liked best. She pressed her hand to her heart, she could scarcely see the picture for her tears.

In the early days of their marriage he had given her a small miniature portrait of himself in a locket attached to a slender chain. She had not worn it until a few weeks ago, when, coming upon it in a drawer, she had put the chain round her neck and the portrait in her bosom. Some impulse now prompted her to take the chain from her neck and place it, with the locket open, next to her photograph, in such a position that his eyes must rest upon it when he turned to the mantel. She had just done this when the turning of the handle of the door caused her to retreat swiftly behind the screen.

Raphael entered, and scarcely glancing around, sank into his chair, and with his head upon his hand, thought sadly of the past and the future. It wanted now but a few minutes to midnight, to the closing of another chapter in his life, to the opening of the next, on the pages of which he knew not what was to be written. For he did not doubt that his connection with *The Needle* was practically ended. He would continue the editorship only until a new editor was appointed, and then he would seek another sphere of labour. It was not without a pang that he contemplated the severance. He loved the paper and the work he did on it, but a promise had been made to him, and it was unfulfilled; and he would not depart from his word.

Presently he relapsed into the purely personal contemplation of his position. How happily the year now closing had commenced for him, how sadly it had ended! The love he had fondly believed was his—the hopes he had cherished—the fair future he had seen before him! Dreams! Dreams! Dreams!

‘So fade our fairest castles!’ he murmured, and rising from his chair, his face towards the mantel, saw the locket he had given to his wife.

How came it there? He remembered when he presented it to her, but he could not remember that she had ever worn it. He gazed at it in bewilderment, and took it into his hand. A soft step behind him, the rustle of a woman’s dress, caused him to turn.

‘Julia!’

She raised her head and gazed at him with a look he had never yet seen on her face. Doubting, wondering, hoping, fearing, he stood, and waited for her to speak. She advanced a step, and pausing, as if fearing to approach nearer, stood humbly before him.

‘Raphael,’ she said, and her voice was very low and beseeching, ‘do not be angry with me! I have come to

ask your forgiveness for all the wrong I have done you !'

'Forgiveness, Julia !' he exclaimed. 'No, no ! Your presence here—this locket—'

'I placed it beside your portrait in the hope that it would plead for me. Raphael, I have done you in thought—only in thought—the deepest injustice a woman could do a man. Nay, let me speak—let me make confession ! The eyes of my soul are opened, and I see my error. Every bitter word I have spoken to you has been a dagger in my heart. If you can forgive me, if you can believe that I was no worse than a wayward woman with an evil counsellor at her side, who basely perverted every tender act in which you sought to show your love for me—his power over me went no further than that, indeed, indeed, it did not !—the sorrow that weighs me down will be relieved, and I shall feel that I have not erred in coming to you, even though the dearer hope I cherish may not be fulfilled.'

A grave tenderness was in Raphael's voice as he answered, 'I truly believe you, Julia. You have not erred in coming to me. If I had known where to find you I should have come to you.'

'I had an object in keeping apart from you until now. I feared that I might betray myself, and reveal a secret I wished to preserve. But Mr Sheldon has told me of your determination respecting the paper—'

'Mr Sheldon ! The paper !' he exclaimed, a light breaking upon him.

'I strove to profit by the example you set me. I heard you say once that the editor of a daily paper wielded a glorious power for good, and I consulted Mr Sheldon—'

He interrupted her eagerly.

'Then the paper is yours.'

'No,' she replied, 'it is yours, if you will accept it from me.'

He saw in her face that there was something more to be revealed, and he held in abeyance the tender demonstration of his joy.

‘There is another thing I wish to say, Raphael. The balance that was due to the creditors of the estates—’

‘It is you who paid it!’

‘The fortune I possessed was given to me by your father. It was his, it was yours, and could not be more justly used. Raphael, until now I have shown you the worser part of myself. I implore you to give me the opportunity of showing you the better!’

He drew her to him, and held her in a close embrace. Presently he said,—

‘There is an old legend that by the side of every human being two angels stand, one urging him to evil, the other to good. Your good angel has triumphed. I thank God!’

‘Are you truly happy, Raphael?’

‘Do you love me, Julia?’

‘With all my heart and soul.’

‘I am truly happy,’ he said. ‘This is the very sacrament of love.’

They stood heart to heart, so engrossed in the joy of this sweetest of reconciliations that neither noticed the entrance of the Earl of Lynwood and Moses Mendoza.

The parents entered very quietly, and seeing how their children were engaged, stepped softly to the back of the room, gazing with full-hearted love at the picture before them.

Suddenly Julia and Raphael became aware of their presence, and turned towards them; but something in his father’s face caused Raphael to resist the impulse of advancing immediately towards him. It was not alone that Moses Mendoza’s face was beaming, but there was on it a kind of foreknowledge of what had just been revealed to Raphael.

‘Did anyone besides Mr Sheldon share your secret, Julia?’ he asked.

‘Yes. Your father did, and mine.’

‘Then you and my dear father are friends?’

Julia extricated herself from Raphael’s embrace, and going to Moses Mendoza raised her face to his, and said,—

‘Will you kiss me, Mr Mendoza?’

He passed his arm around her. Their lips met.

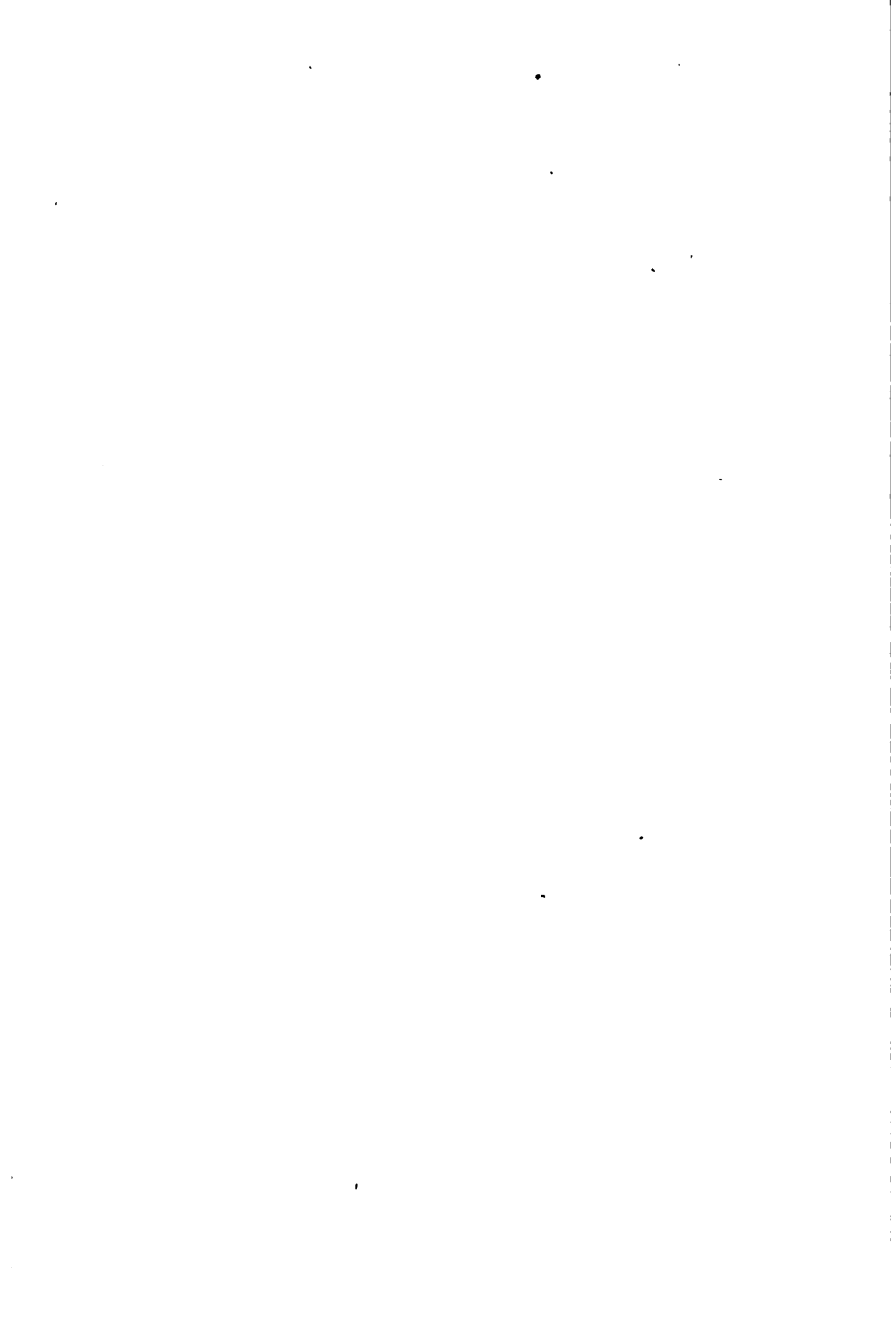
‘It needed but this to complete my happiness,’ said Raphael. ‘Come, let us sit round the fire. Hark!’

The bells of the New Year rang out.

‘The New Year,’ said Julia.

‘The New Life,’ said Raphael.

THE END





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